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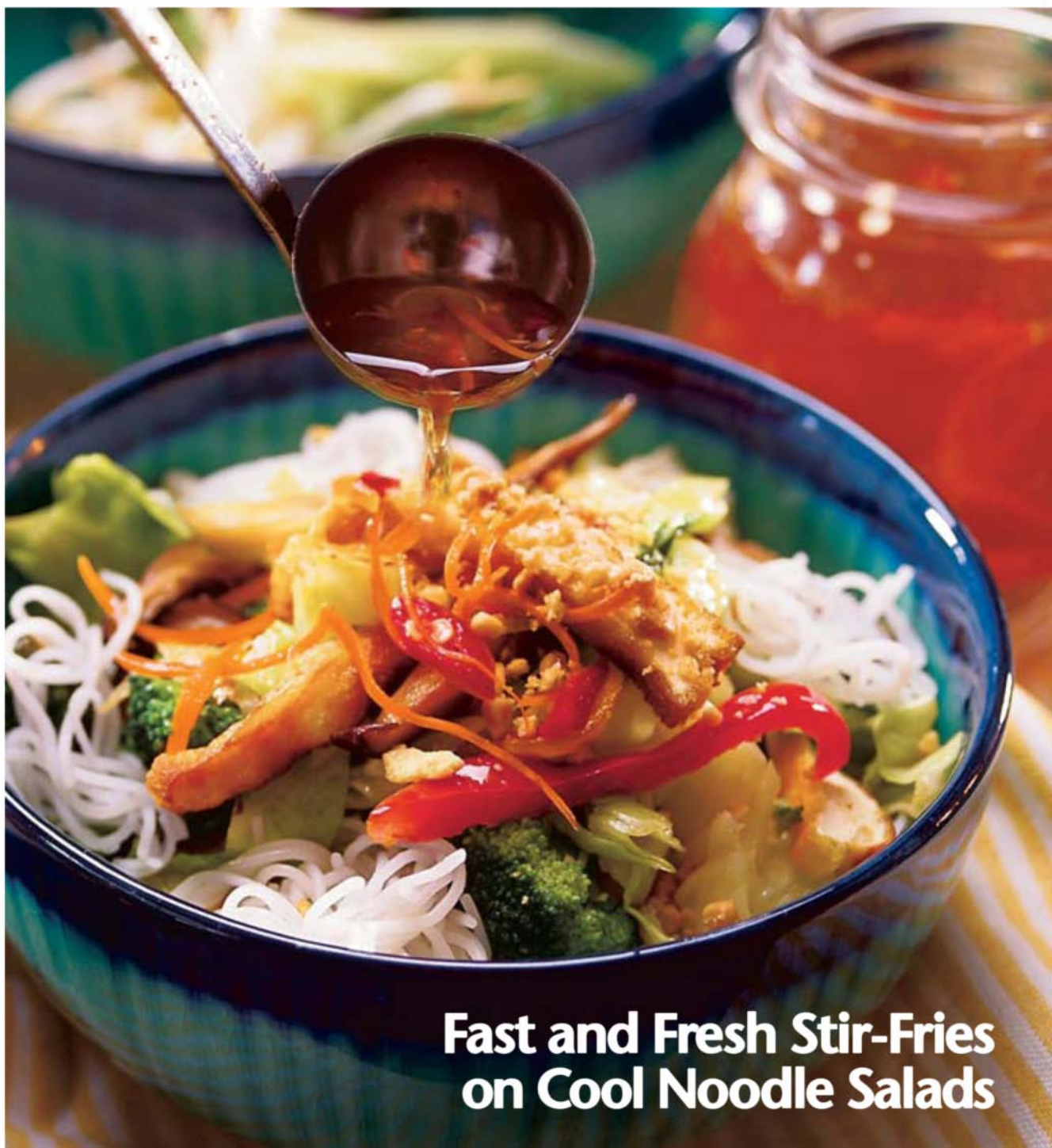
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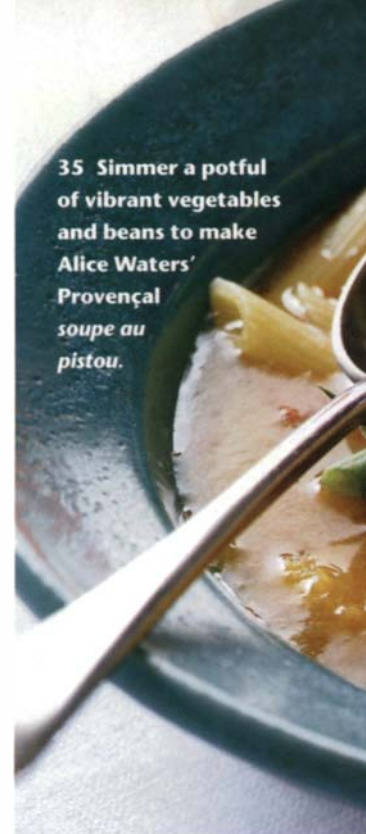
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40 Enjoy a juicy, spice-rubbed roast with detailed advice on grill-roasting from Molly Stevens.

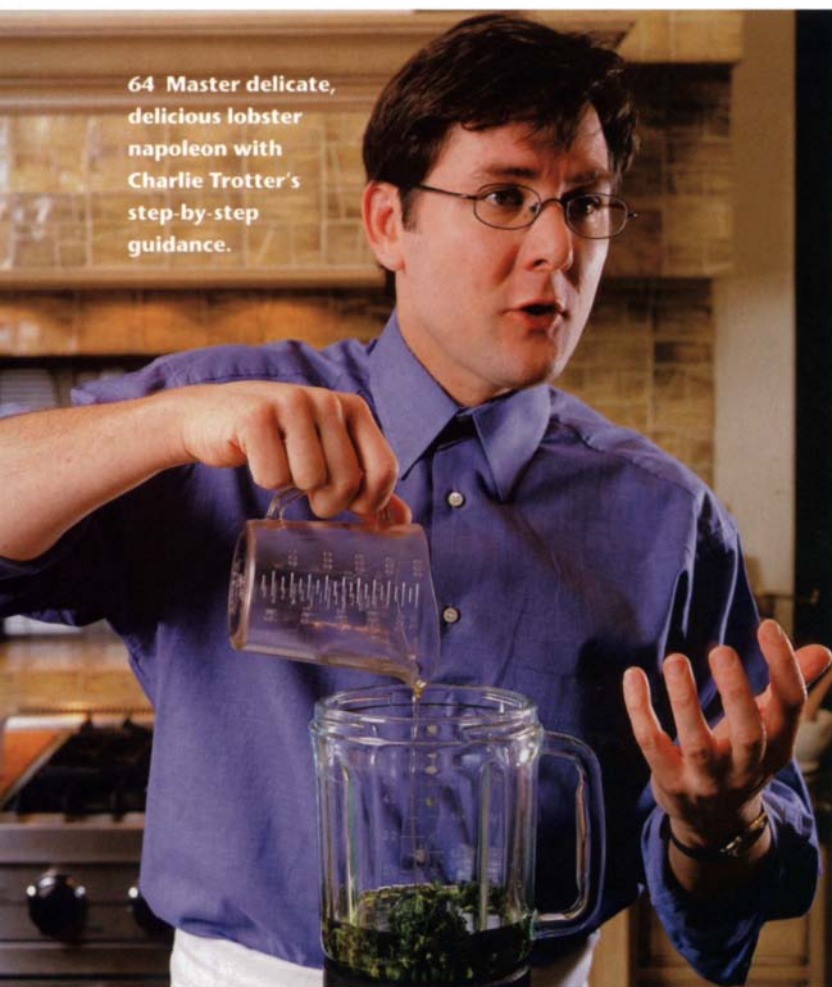


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JUNE/JULY 1998 ISSUE 27

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**On the cover:** Vietnamese Noodle Salad with Stir-Fried Vegetables, "Cool Noodle Salads for Warm Summer Nights," p. 61.

Cover photo: Ben Fink; image editing: Bill Godfrey.

These pages: top left series and bottom left: Ben Fink; above, Mark Thomas; bottom right, Martha Holmberg.

**74 Savor the sweetness of early summer strawberries with Stephen Durfee's four fabulous desserts.**



# CONTRIBUTORS



When it comes to food, **Joanne Weir** ("Chicken Salads," p. 30) does it all—she cooks, teaches, writes, even does television. A fourth-generation professional cook, Joanne's cooking experience includes five years at Chez Panisse in Berkeley,

California, and a year of full-time apprenticeship with Madeleine Kamman. She now teaches cooking classes in San Francisco and around the world.

A columnist for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Joanne has published a number of cookbooks,

including *From Tapas To Meze* (Crown, 1994), which was nominated for a James Beard Cookbook Award, and *You Say Tomato* (Broadway Books, 1998). Her 26-part television series for PBS, called "Now Weir Cooking," is due to air early in 1999.

Since opening Chez Panisse 27 years ago, **Alice Waters** ("Summer Menu," p. 35) has never wavered from her central philosophy in the kitchen—using only local, seasonal, organic fruits and vegetables, first and foremost. At 19, she "went eating in France," as she describes her year of study abroad, which began her life-long journey to find, cook, and serve fresh food. The author of numerous cookbooks, including *Chez Panisse Vegetables* (Harper Collins, 1996), Alice lives in Berkeley, California.



Although **Molly Stevens** ("Roasts on the Grill," p. 40) officially hung up her teaching toque in 1996 (she worked at the New England Culinary Institute for seven years), that hasn't stopped her from hopping a plane to France to assist at her alma mater, La Varenne, whenever she can. She also travels this side of the Atlantic to do cooking demonstrations for Oldways Preservation & Exchange Trust (based in Cambridge, Massachusetts) and of course for *Fine Cooking*, where she is a contributing editor. When at home in Vermont, she works as a freelance editor and writer.

French-born **Jean-Louis Gerin** ("French-Style Potato Salad," p. 44) started his restaurant

career at age 13 and hasn't stopped cooking since. In France he worked with several renowned chefs, including Guy Savoy, whom Gerin helped open restaurants in Paris and Greenwich, Connecticut. In 1985,

Jean-Louis bought the Greenwich restaurant—and Restaurant Jean-Louis has been gathering acclaim ever since.

**Abigail Johnson Dodge** ("Fruit Fools," p. 50) has been cooking professionally since starting her own catering business at age 16. She went on to study cooking at La Varenne in Paris and apprenticed in Paris before returning to the United States. Abby is director of *Fine Cooking's* test kitchen, the author of *Great Fruit Desserts* (Rizzoli, 1997), and a contributing writer for the new *Joy of Cooking* (Scribner, 1997). She is working on her next book, *The Weekend Baker*.

For seven years, **Sarah Jay** ("Buying a Grill," p. 54) trudged along in the newspaper world, covering crime, business, sports, you name it. But something was missing. Her colleagues began to notice that she'd often sneak food references into her articles. Then she took time off to apprentice with a French baker and to track down a favorite cookbook author in Provence. Finally, she shed all pretenses and plunged headfirst into what she'd wanted all along—to become an editor at *Fine Cooking*. She joined the staff in January and has been sneaking food references into her articles ever since.

**Mai Pham** ("Cool Noodle Salads," p. 58) is the chef and owner of Lemon Grass Restaurant and Cafes in Sacramento and the author of *The Best of Vietnamese & Thai Cooking* (Prima, 1996). She writes a monthly food column for the *San Francisco Chronicle* and teaches at the Culinary Institute of America at Greystone. Mai is currently working on *A Bowl of Pho*, to be published by HarperCollins.



Over the last decade, **Charlie Trotter** ("Lobster Napoleon," p. 64) dedicated himself to learning all he could about flavors from around the world and cultural influences. The result is a sparkling, original cuisine that Trotter serves at his Chicago restaurant, Charlie Trotter's. The restaurant has received many awards, including member status in the prestigious Relais & Chateaux. Charlie is the author of six cookbooks, including the upcoming *Charlie Trotter's Desserts* and *The Kitchen Sessions with Charlie Trotter* (both from Ten Speed Press). He has just completed filming a 13-part television series, which will air on PBS this fall.



**Amy Albert** ("Life at the Speed of Bread," p. 69 and "Outdoor Kitchens," p. 46) is an associate editor for *Fine Cooking* with a passion for words, food, wine, and meeting extraordinary people. "I arrived at the Webers' farm intending to learn about life as an artisan bread baker—which I did—but we ended up having the most amazing conversations—about jazz, design, the unconscious, and a million other things," she says.

In a former life, **Stephen Durfee** ("Strawberry Desserts," p. 74) was a high school teacher and a lacrosse coach, but when he landed in New York several years ago looking for a way to finance graduate school, he took a bread baking job and never looked back. Durfee studied, and taught, at Peter Kump's New York Cooking School, and he honed his pastry skills working at Alison on Dominick in New York and at the Wheatleigh Hotel in Lenox, Massachusetts, before jumping coasts to work at the French Laundry in Yountville, California, where he has been the pastry chef for the last two years.





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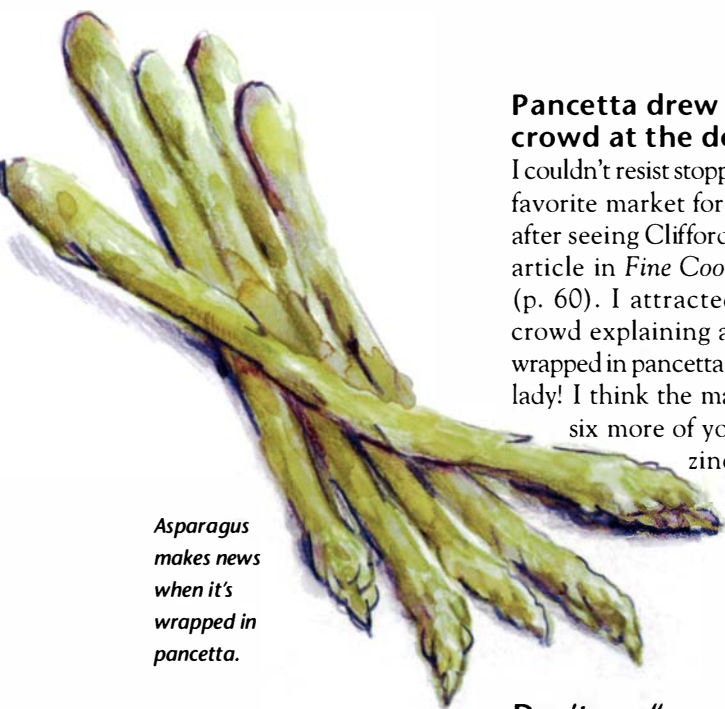
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*Asparagus makes news when it's wrapped in pancetta.*

## Pancetta drew a crowd at the deli

I couldn't resist stopping by my favorite market for pancetta after seeing Clifford Wright's article in *Fine Cooking* #25 (p. 60). I attracted quite a crowd explaining asparagus wrapped in pancetta to my deli lady! I think the market sold

six more of your magazines due to this discussion.

—Scott Erickson, via e-mail

## Don't say "caramelize" unless you mean it

Regarding John Khoury's letter and your reply (*FC* #25, p. 8), I'm delighted to know that you don't want to perpetuate cooking myths. I love your magazine, but I'm afraid that you're doing just that.

I took a food science course in college and I remember how much the professor loathed the overuse of the word *caramelize*. Caramelization is only one of a number of browning reactions. It only occurs when sugars brown. There are also browning reactions involving proteins or fats or both, but those aren't caramelization.

Referring to the article Mr. Khoury cited, *sautéing browns* a chop, but it almost certainly doesn't *caramelize* it. The same is true of *sautéing* anything else (onion, etc.). Saying otherwise is sloppy.

—Jonathan Bruschi, Winthrop, MA

**Editors' reply:** Mr. Bruschi's food science professor is correct: the term *caramelization* means the breakdown of sucrose at high temperatures,

while the type of browning that happens with meat and other foods is more likely to be something called a *Maillard reaction*. (Our own food science expert, Shirley Corriher, explains it all in this issue's Food Science department, p. 88.)

We confess that we're guilty of furthering the corruption of this technical term. But we also confess that we prefer the term *caramelize* over the term *browning*. *Browning* just describes a color change, while *caramelize* evokes changes in color, flavor, and fragrance—much more accurate, really, and much more appealing.

## I'd like more roasted vegetables, please

I've made your roasted root vegetables many times (*FC* #25, pp. 30), and no matter how much I make, every piece disappears. The capacity of my oven has reached its limit. Any suggestions as to how I can prepare several batches and then reheat a large quantity without losing the crispy yumminess of the vegetables?

—Allison Brandt, via e-mail

## Susie Middleton replies:

You'll get best results if you reheat the vegetables by spreading them out on sheets or in pans without letting them overlap too much (or they'll just steam), and then putting them into a 375°F oven for about 10 minutes.

## Errata

We omitted a step from Jacques Torres' chocolate sauce recipe (Reviews, *FC* #26, p. 81). After bringing the cream, butter, and sugar to a boil, pour the mixture into the warm ganache and then continue with the recipe. Our apologies. ♦

# Fine COOKING

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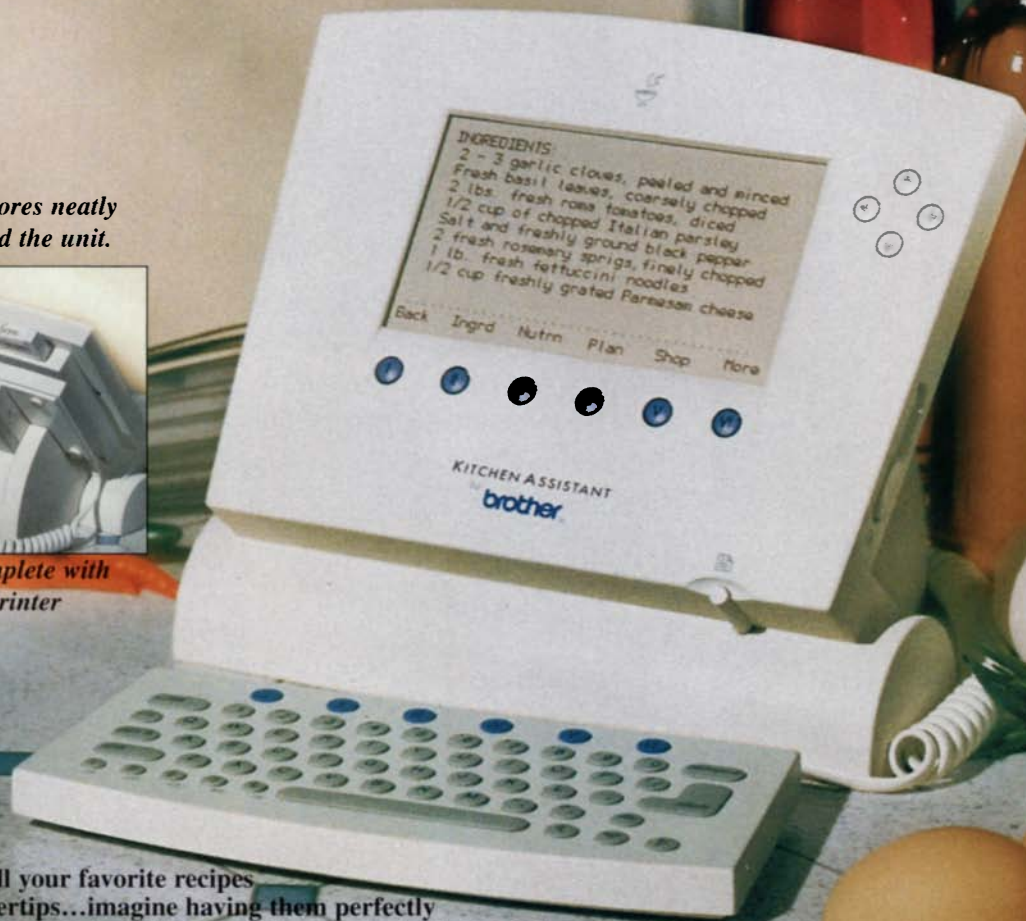
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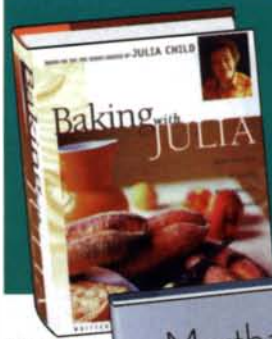
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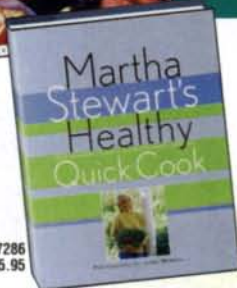
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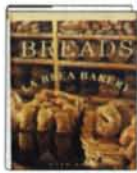
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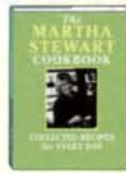
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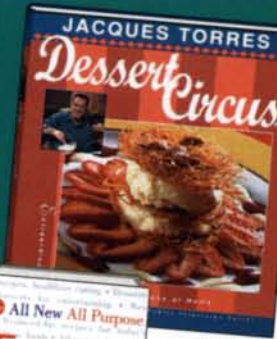
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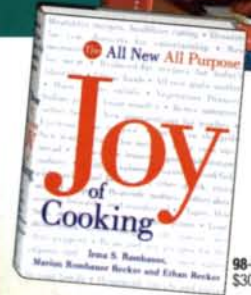
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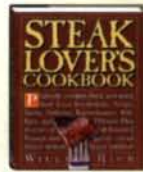
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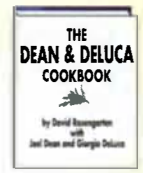
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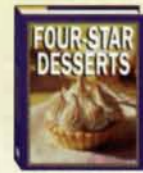
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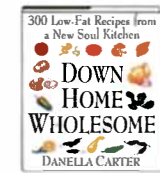
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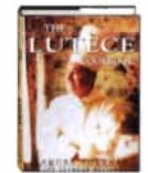
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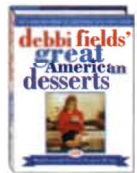
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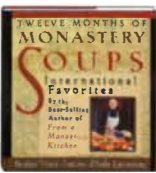
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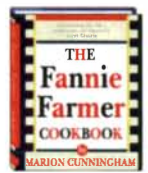
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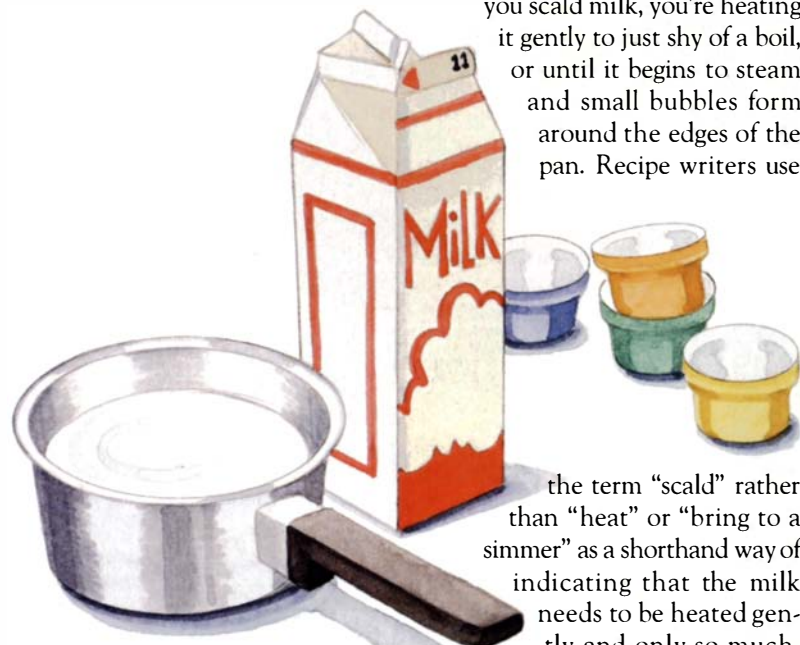
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Scalding milk helps it combine more easily with other ingredients and speeds cooking.

## Why scald milk?

*Why do recipes, particularly for pudding and ice cream, call for scalding milk? What does it do?*

—William E. Temple, Tucson, AZ

**Molly Stevens replies:** When you scald milk, you're heating it gently to just shy of a boil, or until it begins to steam and small bubbles form around the edges of the pan. Recipe writers use

the term "scald" rather than "heat" or "bring to a simmer" as a shorthand way of indicating that the milk needs to be heated gently and only so much. Milk scorches all too easily when you heat it too quickly or at too high a temperature, and once scorched, it has an acrid flavor that will ruin an entire dessert.

In most cases, scalding has nothing to do with destroying pathogens or enzymes since pasteurization has already

taken care of that. (In the rare case of farm-fresh raw milk, scalding is essential to destroy certain enzymes that can interfere with the normal development of doughs and custards; it isn't, however, a substitute for pasteurization.)

Scalding regular store-bought milk is simply an efficient step to combine ingredients and speed cooking. Sugar dissolves more readily in hot milk; butter and chopped chocolate melt more quickly in it; and when you combine milk with flour, scalded milk stirs in more evenly without creating lumps.

*Molly Stevens is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.*

## How can I make crème fraîche?

*I love using crème fraîche, but I sometimes can't find it at the market. How can I make crème fraîche at home?*

—Patrick Connors, Philadelphia, PA

**Elaine Sterling replies:** Crème fraîche is fermented cream thickened by acid-producing bacteria. Its nutty, slightly sour

flavor and smooth consistency make it especially good for enriching sauces and for using as a garnish for desserts, canapés, soups, and caviar.

It's simple to make crème fraîche at home. In a small saucepan, warm two cups of heavy cream (avoid ultra-pasteurized cream if you can; because of the processing, it doesn't ferment as well) to 100°F. If you don't have a thermometer, you can test the temperature with your finger: the cream should feel slightly warmer than body temperature. Stir in ¼ cup store-bought buttermilk (use the freshest buttermilk possible to ensure souring and thickening) and then transfer the mixture to a clean glass or



*Crème fraîche gives a tangy, rich touch to savories and sweets, and it's easy to make at home.*

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plastic container with a cover. Set the cream in a warm spot that's about 70° to 80°F (such as the top of a gas stove, providing the pilot is lit, or near a heater) and let it stand for at least 24 hours. Put the *crème fraîche* in the refrigerator for at least four hours to let it thicken further. *Crème fraîche* will keep well under refrigeration for about ten days. *Elaine Sterling is a chef, cooking instructor, and restaurant consultant in New York City.*

### What is unsulfured molasses?

*What is unsulfured molasses? Does this type of molasses make a difference in baking?*

—Urbana Wiggins,  
New Canaan, CT



*Almost all molasses on the market today is unsulfured.*

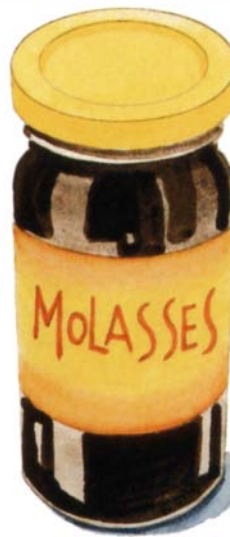
### Maxine Buckelew replies:

Two products are made from processing sugar cane—sugar and molasses. Years ago, sulfur was included in the sugar production process in order to preserve and enhance the sugar's white color. As a result, molasses contained small amounts of sulfur as well.

Today, sulfur is rarely used in sugar refining here in the United States, so almost all

molasses made from sugar processed in the U.S. is unsulfured. And even if you have a jar of molasses that's made from sulfured sugar, the amount of sulfur is so small that it will have no effect in cooking or on flavor.

*Maxine Buckelew is a senior product manager for Brer Rabbit Molasses.*



### How long will egg whites and yolks last?

*How long can I safely keep egg whites in the refrigerator? What about egg yolks?*

—Patsy Cameron-Clegg,  
Montreal, Quebec

**Elisa Maloberti replies:** If you have a recipe that calls for only egg whites or only yolks, it's easy and safe to save the leftovers. Whites will keep for up to four days if you store them in a covered container in the refrigerator.

Store leftover egg yolks in water in a covered container in the fridge, and be sure to use them within a day or two. *Elisa Maloberti is the consumer information coordinator for the American Egg Board.* ♦



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# Buttery-Sweet Summer Squash for Fresh Summer Meals

As the warmer weather settles in, I love to see summer squashes as they ripen early in the garden and appear on the stands at my local markets. Seeing all the diverse shapes and vibrant colors—and in the kitchen, coaxing them to their succulent best—is as sweet a pleasure as long days and balmy nights.

Zucchini, the fast-growing summer squash we all know best, is just one of many summer squash varieties. Cooked to tender perfection, all are nutty-sweet and delicious, whether steamed, sautéed, poached, baked, or grilled.

## LOOK FOR FIRM SQUASH WITH NO BLEMISHES

All summer squash tastes best

when it's picked young; if squash is allowed to grow too big, it gets watery, tough, and tasteless. Look for squash that's brightly colored, firm, and plump, with a filled-out look and no blemishes. The skin should have a smooth, glossy sheen. Stay away from bruised, dull-looking or flaccid squash—it will be bland and watery.

Zucchini-type squash is best when it's no more than six inches long, and pattypan or round squash should be between two and four inches in diameter. If you choose tiny “baby” squash, again, make sure they're brightly colored, plump, and tender.

If you see summer squash with fresh-looking blossoms still attached, buy them. This

*Ronde de Nice is tender and rich-tasting. Handle this easy-bruising squash gently and use it promptly for the freshest taste and texture. Steam or sauté baby Rondes de Nice whole. For a delicious main course, stuff larger ones with a mixture of sautéed onions, ground lamb, spinach, cooked rice, a pinch of cumin, and feta cheese; bake until tender.*



*Green pattypan is juicier and meatier than other summer squash. Thanks to the scalloped edges, pattypan slices up into beguiling shapes. Hollow them out, sauté the insides with onions, celery, garlic, and dill, stuff this back into the shells, top with Gruyère cheese, and bake.*



*Yellow crookneck has a buttery flavor and creamy texture; it's a favorite with farmers' market growers. Be sure to choose small ones that are no more than 4 or 5 inches long. Varieties with full S-shaped necks have the best flavor. Try chunks of crookneck poached in broth and topped with a knob of herb butter.*



*Golden zucchini is sunny yellow and shaped just like its green cousin. Don't confuse it with pale yellow straightneck summer squash (which I find bland and watery by comparison). Mix golden zucchini with green ones for a colorful and tasty sauté or grill.*



is a sure sign that the squash was picked and handled carefully on the way to the market.

You'll find some yellow crookneck squash that have a slightly bumpy look to their skin. It just means you've come across an old-fashioned variety rather than one of the newer hybrids, where the bumps have been bred out.

#### BUY A MIX FOR COLOR AND FLAVOR VARIATION

Whenever they're available, be sure to buy several different shapes and colors. They'll look great in a finished dish, and the subtle variations in

flavor and texture make a lovely mix.

Cooking summer squash in a little butter or olive oil with garlic, shallots, or scallions coaxes out its mild, buttery taste. Chopped summer herbs such as basil, dill, lemon thyme, chives, and flat-leaf parsley are good at setting off the delicate flavors of summer squash.

Cook chunks of summer squash with eggplant, tomatoes, bell peppers, garlic, and onion; season with a splash of good balsamic vinegar to make a ratatouille-type dish.

For an easy supper, I love to combine a variety of sliced summer squashes in a casserole with chunks of tomatoes and onions. I top the vegetables with sweet Italian sausages sliced down the middle and bake the casserole until the sausage is browned, the vegetables are fork-tender, and the sausage juices have flavored the vegetables.

*Renee Shepherd is a longtime cook and gardener. She owns Renee's Garden, a seed company whose packets are sold at independent nurseries nationwide.* ♦

*Golden Scallop (also called Golden Sunburst) is my favorite baby squash because of its especially nutty flavor. Buy them no larger than 2½ inches in diameter. These sweet little shapes are wonderful steamed and topped with fresh parsley or dill and a little butter.*



*Green zucchini is medium or dark green with tiny golden flecks; its skin is smooth or lightly ridged. For a delicious chilled soup, purée cooked zucchini with chicken broth, add fresh chopped herbs, and stir in a dollop of sour cream or fresh plain yogurt.*



*Lebanese zucchini (also called Middle Eastern) is shorter and plumper than its darker relatives, with a blunt, rounded bottom end. This celadon-colored squash has thin, tender skin and meltingly creamy flesh. Try it with couscous or rice: sliced thin, sautéed with garlic, fresh mint, and raisins, and sprinkled with toasted pine nuts.*

## More at the market

Look for these signs of summer on market stands:

♦ **Basil** for pesto. Make a big batch and freeze some, so you'll have a stash for the cold months.

♦ **Green tomatoes** to bread and fry, or for a fiery salsa.

♦ **Early red tomatoes** to slice and serve with basil and mozzarella, drizzled with fruity olive oil. Toss diced, drained tomatoes, minced garlic, fresh oregano, olive oil, and chopped olives with just-boiled pasta shells for a quick supper.

♦ **Green beans** to steam and toss with a tangy vinaigrette, minced shallots, and crisped bacon bits.

♦ **Sugar snap peas** for an Asian-style stir-fry, with garlic, ginger, beef, and sesame oil.

♦ **Strawberries** to enjoy plain and simple, topped with a dash of aged balsamic vinegar.



## Whip up meringues and omelets with liquid egg whites

A new product, Eggology 100% Pure Liquid Egg Whites, has been invented—just for me, it seems. As a pastry chef, up until now I had two options if I didn't want to waste a lot of egg yolks when making macaroons or meringues. The first was powdered egg whites (nice, but not a fresh product) or egg substitutes (not nice, with additives and preservatives). Now I have Eggology: pasteurized liquid whites that, in a way, are fresher than eggs at the grocery store because they're processed only hours after being laid.

After pasteurization, these whites are thoroughly tested for salmonella, so I know I can use them safely in royal icing for my kids' cookies or in a healthy smoothie for myself.

When I got my first containers of Eggology egg whites, I went crazy making egg-white omelets (very

light and fluffy), swirling the whites into simmering broth for egg-drop soup, and testing my recipe for Pass-over macaroons. Best of all, I poured a cup of the whites (brought to room temperature) into my mixer with a pinch of cream of tartar, and I had a voluminous mound of meringue that seemed to have an extra silkiness. And I didn't have any messy shells or leftover yolks to deal with.

I found these whites really useful, and I like the fact that they stay fresh for up to four months (even opened) in the refrigerator or freezer. Visit [www.eggology.com](http://www.eggology.com) or call 888/669-6557 for information on where to find Liquid Egg Whites or to place an order. A 16-ounce container (about 18 whites) is \$4.49 in retail stores; a 64-ounce container (78 egg whites) is \$18.95, including delivery, shipped directly from Eggology.

—Marcy Goldman, editor of the Baker Boulanger web site ([www.betterbaking.com](http://www.betterbaking.com))

## Two good ideas for storing knives

All of us who love to cook share the same problem: how (or where) to store our knives. Knife blocks are convenient, but they take up a lot of counter space, and they don't necessarily hold all your knives. I like magnetic knife bars, but they need a really safe spot for knives to hang. So if you're like me and have at least a few knives that wind up in drawers, you'll be interested in two options for protecting both blades and fingers.

**Edge-Guards** (top) are heavy-duty plastic knife sheaths that couldn't be less expensive or more effective.

They come in a range of sizes and cost from \$1.75 to \$3. They protect your knives wherever they are, which makes them ideal if you want to carry your knives around (to picnics or parties—or to the job, as professional chefs do.)



The second option for keeping knives safely

in a drawer is a **wooden knife tray**. While these trays are more expensive than Edge-Guards, they're also better looking and will help organize your clutter. One tray I particularly like is called The Wave (above). Crafted of New England ash, it gently cradles five large and six small knives, and it won't dull the blades. At 9 inches wide by 16½ inches long, it fits nicely into a kitchen drawer. The Wave (\$34.95) and Edge-Guards in ten sizes are available from Professional Cutlery Direct (800/859-6994).

—Susie Middleton, associate editor, Fine Cooking

## Events

### SCOOPER BOWL

Boston Common  
Boston, Massachusetts  
June 2–4  
Scooper Bowl visitors consume more than a dozen tons of ice cream and frozen yogurt in 36 flavors. Some of America's largest ice cream makers come here to test-market their brand-new flavors. Call 617/632-3300.

### CEREAL FESTIVAL

Battle Creek, Michigan  
June 13  
John Kellogg and Charles Post invented modern cereal here. At the festival, the Cereal City puts on the world's longest free breakfast table: picnic tables stretch down Michigan Avenue loaded with 20 kinds of cereal, doughnut holes, and coffee and tea. Call 800/397-2240.

### CHERRY FESTIVAL

Emmett City Park  
Emmett, Idaho  
June 14–23  
Idaho is ranked eighth among the States in sweet cherry production. Festival goers celebrate this sweet statistic by wolfing down cherry cobblers, ice cream, cakes, pies, cookies, and bushels of fresh cherries. Call 208/365-3485.

### PEACH FESTIVAL

Fort Valley, Georgia  
June 19–21  
Festival workers cook 1,500 pounds of peaches in a specially constructed pan, stirring the fruit for eight hours, to make the world's largest peach cobbler. Other treats: peach ice cream, sauce, jams, chutneys, salsas, fresh peaches, and a dessert recipe cook-off. Call 912/825-4002.

### BLUEBERRY FESTIVAL

Jefferson Davis  
Community College  
Brewton, Alabama  
June 20  
Brewton ships blueberries all over the Southeast. Sample the local berries in the homemade ice cream, cobbler, blueberry delight, pancakes, waffles, and cakes. Enter a blueberry dish in the recipe contest. Call 334/867-3224.

Send October and November event listings (by July 1) to *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or e-mail ([fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com)).

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## Try deliciously nutty Israeli couscous

With the popularity of Mediterranean cuisines, many of us have made couscous a part of our dinner menus. But few of us are familiar with a larger form of couscous known as Israeli (or sometimes Middle Eastern) couscous. Like its smaller cousin, Israeli couscous is made from semolina flour and water. It resembles small balls of pasta, but unlike regular couscous, it's usually

toasted before cooking, and it tends to retain a pleasantly firm bite after cooking.

American chefs have picked up on the pleasing texture of Israeli couscous—and its ability to absorb the flavor of the liquids it's cooked in. John Ash, the culinary director of Fetzer Vineyards, demonstrated this quality at a recent culinary conference in San Francisco by cooking a delicious dish of Israeli couscous with wild mushrooms in a smoked tomato broth.

After eating Ash's dish, I got excited about cooking some of this couscous at home. I tried it in different flavorful broths, including vegetable and chicken stock (always pan-toasting it first), and I loved its nutty flavor and firm texture. I especially liked it cooked in coconut milk as a base for a Thai-style curry.

Israeli couscous is available from the Indian Harvest catalog (800/294-2433) in 1- and 3-pound packages (\$3.95 and \$11.59).

—Ann Martin, *recipe tester and food writer*,  
San Francisco



## Restaurant chefs give swordfish a break

Rick Moonen, executive chef of Oceana in New York City, has decided to take swordfish off his menu—at least for 1998. "I've got to take it off before it takes itself off," Moonen commented at a press conference held earlier this year at Lidia Bastianich's restaurant, Felidia, in New York. Led by chef Nora Pouillon of Nora and Asia in Washington, D.C., a group of chefs announced their support of the "Give Swordfish a Break" campaign launched by the environmental organizations SeaWeb and the Natural Resources Defense Council. Eric Ripert

(Le Bernardin, New York), Norman van Aken (Norman's, Miami), and Gordon Hamersley (Hamersley's Bistro, Boston) are just a few of the chefs who have agreed not to serve swordfish, at least through the end of the year. The North Atlantic swordfish population is severely depleted (and continues to decline, as most swordfish are now caught before they reach reproductive size). The chefs want to give swordfish a chance to recoup, and they hope consumers will follow their lead. For more information, call SeaWeb at 888/473-2932 or visit its site at [www.seaweb.org](http://www.seaweb.org).



## Kitchen Sink soap steals smells from your hands

Origins, the cosmetics company, now makes Kitchen Sink, a hand soap laden with herbs and essential oils that removes even really stubborn food odors. If you've ever arrived at the dinner table with hands smelling a little too strongly of the kitchen, you'll want to try a bar. I used Kitchen Sink after skinning raw salmon, chopping scallions, mincing garlic, trimming skirt steak, and crushing ginger—the soap took all the odors from my hands each time. Kitchen Sink smells pleasantly of lavender and olive oil, and it's hard-milled for long life. Find a bar for around \$5 at Origins retail stores, or call Origins at 800/674-4467.

—Amy Albert, *associate editor*, Fine Cooking

## Events

### MOON PIE GAMES

Bell Buckle, Tennessee  
June 20  
Southerners are passionate about their Moon Pies: chocolate-covered graham crackers filled with marshmallow and covered with icing. The festival features the world's largest Moon Pie, desserts made with Moon Pies, and a Moon Pie—RC Cola recipe contest. Call 931/389-9371.

### ZUCCHINI FESTIVAL

Eldorado, Ohio  
July 17–19  
The people of Eldorado have found an alternative to forcing extra zucchini on unwary neighbors—they feed it to strangers. The squash appears in breads, casseroles, shakes, and relishes. A zucchini cook-off has categories for desserts and casseroles. Call 937/273-2791.

### WINE & FOOD SYMPOSIUM

Kapalua Resort  
Kapalua, Maui, Hawaii  
July 17–19  
Well-known winemakers and chefs collaborate on demonstrations, wine tastings, and meals. Also featured: a sampling of more than 100 wines, and island seafood prepared by ten of Hawaii's hottest chefs. Call 800/527-2582.

### TROPICAL AGRICULTURAL FIESTA

Fruit & Spice Park  
Homestead, Florida  
July 18–19  
The fiesta offers a look at tropical fruits and Asian vegetables. Sample rare and exotic fruits and learn how to handle them. Local chefs show how to slice Asian vegetables for tempura or stir-frying. Call 305/247-5727.

### BAGEL FEST

Mattoon, Illinois  
July 24–25  
Lender's Bagel Bakery will give away 70,000 bagels with cream cheese and jelly at the festival. Hoping to set a world record, Lender's is also baking the World's Largest Blueberry Bagel in a specially constructed oven. Call 217/235-5661.



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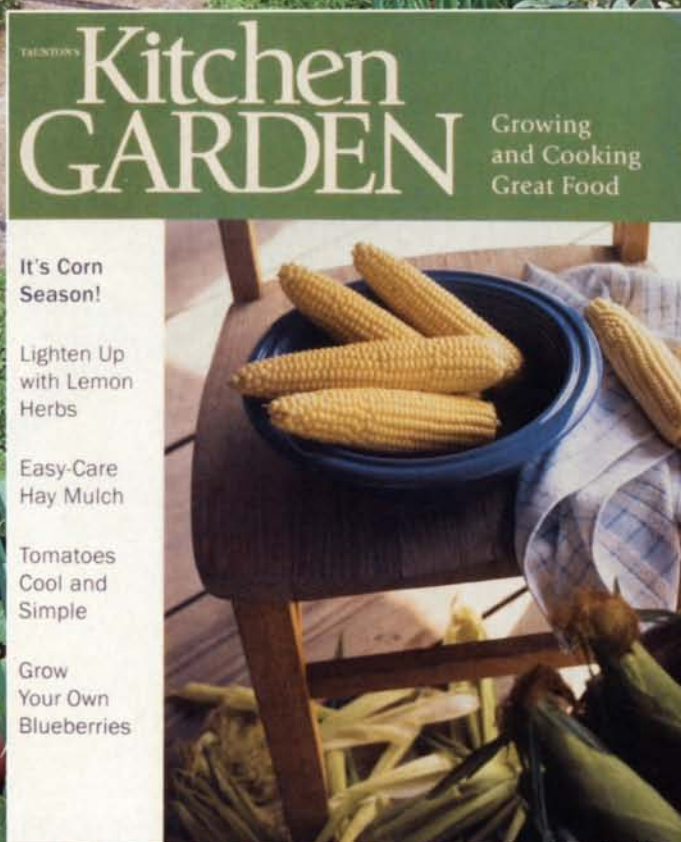
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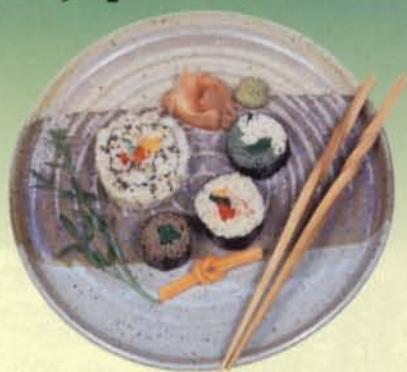
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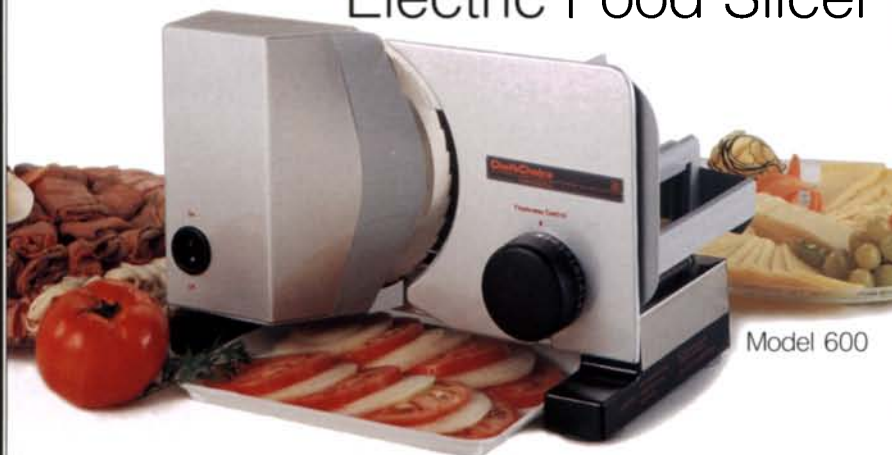
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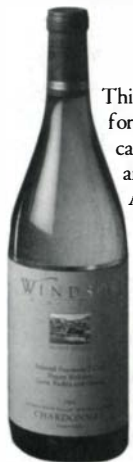


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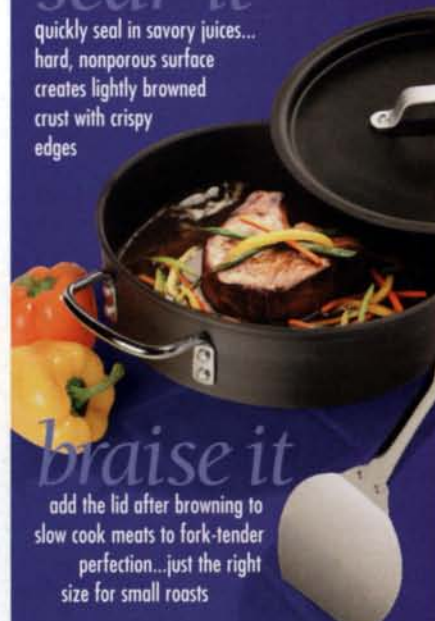
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# Using Gelatin to Give Desserts Body and Shape

**T**hose of us who recall those omnipresent technicolor rings of Jell-O when we were kids might shudder to hear that gelatin-based desserts are springing up at fine restaurants. But these aren't our mothers' molds.

Flavored with whole fruit, fruit purées, wine, spirits, cinnamon, or mint, gelatin desserts can be sophisticated, with a jewel-like splendor. A perfect example of this is Stephen Durfee's terrine of strawberries and Champagne (p. 77).

When added to flavorful custardy bases and lightened with whipped cream, egg whites, or a combination of both, gelatin gives body and

staying power to light-as-air mousses, Bavarian creams, and sweet cold soufflés, such as the lemon soufflé at right.

However you plan to use gelatin, the key to making successful desserts with it lies in properly incorporating the gelatin into your other ingredients for smooth, tender results.

## POWDERED GELATIN IS EASY TO WORK WITH

Gelatin comes in powdered and leaf (or sheet) forms; they produce identical results. I always use powdered (granular) gelatin, as do most of the chefs I know, because it's readily available and easy to use. In

*Gelatin keeps a cold lemon soufflé from falling. Properly handled, gelatin will give the soufflé a melt-in-your-mouth texture.*

Europe, there's a stronger tradition of using the sheet gelatin, which some claim is easier to measure but which needs more soaking time to release its gelling properties.

**The amount of gelatin you need depends on your recipe.** The perfect gelatin dessert is firm enough to hold

its shape yet tender enough to melt quickly on your tongue. Too much gelatin makes a dessert that's stiff and rubbery; too little causes the dessert to split and collapse. One packet of unflavored powdered gelatin (about 2¼ teaspoons or ¼ ounce) will set about 2 cups of liquid (just remember "a packet per pint"). If you need a softer set to the dessert, as for a mousse, for example, you

## Soften powdered gelatin and then melt it one of two ways



*Sprinkle the gelatin over a little bit of cold liquid (in a small bowl or saucepan) to soften it. The ratio is usually about ¼ cup water per packet. Allow the granules to swell until they no longer look like separate entities, about 5 minutes.*



*Melt the softened gelatin right in a warm mixture, such as a custard. Stir often to keep the gelatin from separating, and don't let the mixture boil.*



*Alternatively, melt the softened gelatin directly on the stove. Gelatin softened in water will turn clear; in darker liquids, figure the gelatin will melt after about 30 seconds once the liquid is steaming—not boiling—hot. Stir the melted gelatin into your flavor base while it's still warm.*

## Soak sheet gelatin and mix it into warm ingredients



*Cover the brittle sheets with cold water to soften them. Cold water keeps the sheets from absorbing too much liquid. Soak the sheets until softened, about 10 minutes.*



*Squeeze out any excess water from the softened sheets. Grab the sheets with your hands and give them a firm squeeze.*



*Stir the softened sheets directly into a warm mixture. Four sheets of gelatin equal about one packet of powdered gelatin and will set about two cups of liquid.*

may use up to 3 cups of liquid per packet.

### **SOFTEN GELATIN BEFORE MELTING IT**

Using gelatin requires two steps: softening it in a cold liquid (a step called blooming) and then heating the liquid to melt the gelatin. The initial softening helps the gelatin melt and dissolve smoothly.

The liquid you use to soften the gelatin depends on your recipe. Many recipes call for water, but often it will be juice, coffee, wine, or a spirit. The liquid then performs double duty—softening the gelatin and providing flavor.

One way to melt the softened gelatin is in a pan over a low flame. Just don't let the mixture boil: the intense heat will destroy the gelling properties. The melted gelatin is then incorporated as the recipe directs.

Or, you can stir the softened gelatin right into a warm mixture, such as a cooking custard, where it will melt and

dissolve. Be sure to stir as the gelatin melts to keep it from separating from the custard.

### **TIME ADDITIONS WITH CARE**

Gelatin sets rapidly as it cools: remember that fact as you mix it with other ingredients. When adding melted gelatin to a flavor base, like a fruit purée, it's best if the gelatin is still warm (especially if the flavor base is cold) or the gelatin will set as soon as it touches the base and can form strings.

If you add whipped cream or whipped egg whites to a flavored gelatin mixture, as you would for a mousse, a Bavarian cream, or a soufflé, the custard-gelatin mix should be chilled over an ice bath until it feels cool and has thickened slightly. If the gelatin hasn't set enough, it will be too liquid to blend easily with the whipped cream; if it has set too much, its firmness will keep the cream from folding in evenly. If the gelatin mixture sets too firmly before you're ready to

add the other ingredients, warm it gently to soften it.

### **CHILL GELATIN TO SET**

Gelatin-based desserts need some time in the fridge before they're served. I find that six hours is usually sufficient for a perfectly set, chilled dessert. Don't be tempted to freeze the dessert to speed the pro-

cess; frozen gelatin will separate when thawed.

Gelatin desserts will stay tender for about 36 hours of chilling. After that, they'll toughen or lose some of their shape, so plan to serve your dessert no more than a day after making it.

### **INGREDIENTS TO WATCH**

Gelatin won't set if it has been combined with an ingredient containing a certain enzyme that destroys protein molecules. Notable offenders include kiwi, papaya, pineapple, fig, honeydew melon, and fresh ginger. Highly acidic fruits and liquids also give gelatin trouble. When using acidic juices or purées, an extra packet of gelatin may be needed for the dessert to set.

### **Chill the base over ice**



*Chill the gelatin base before adding whipped cream or egg whites. When the gelatin-custard base has reached the consistency of unbeaten egg whites, fold in the whipped ingredients. Then gently pour the mixture into a mold and chill to set.*

*Judith Choate is a cook and a writer; among her sixteen books is Great American Food, which she wrote with Charlie Palmer (Random House, 1996). ♦*

Do you have a better way to clean fresh greens, a neat trick for handling sticky bread dough, or a new way to use an old kitchen tool? Write to *Tips, Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Or send your tip by e-mail to [fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com). We pay for tips we publish.

## Oil the pasta pot before adding water

Many people add a bit of oil to the water before boiling pasta to reduce sticking. But I pour the oil into the bottom of the pot and swirl it around before adding the water, instead of the other way around. I find that when I do this, the pasta is even less likely to stick to the bottom of the pot.

—R. B. Himes,  
Vienna, OH

## Keep cookbook on a music stand

I found that a good way to keep a cookbook out of the way of spatters and spills is to rest it on a sturdy music stand. The stand is adjustable to a good reading height for standing or sitting, and if needed, it comes with a lamp. By positioning the stand on my left (since I'm left-handed) and about three feet from where I'm working, I can keep the book at a safe distance, yet it's still handy.

To find one of these music stands, call or visit a music store that caters to professional musicians.

—Renee Tate,  
St. Louis, MO

## Clean potatoes without peeling

When a recipe involves unpeeled potatoes, I use a grapefruit spoon to clean them. The spoon's point removes eyes, and the serrated edge rubs away dirt without scraping off the peel.

—Bill Moran,  
San Diego, TX



## Use a rubber band to open honey jar

I have discovered a fast and convenient way to unscrew the lid to my honey jar. By putting a wide rubber band around the lid, I can get enough of a grip to open it. I leave the band in place until the jar is empty, at which point I transfer it to the new jar. It's easier than running the lid under hot water, and the rubber band is always there when I need it.

—Verna Poole,  
St. Helena, CA

## Go ahead—write in your cookbook

As a child I was always taught never to write in books. Finally I learned that it's okay to write in your own personal copies of cookbooks or magazines. I write all over the recipes, whether I love them or hate them. I note the date I made the recipe, whether it was a special occasion or just for the family, if I changed any ingredients, if I halved or doubled the recipe, etc. I even mark the recipe with a highlighter both in the index and in the table of contents for easy reference. No longer

do I find myself saying, "Now where is that recipe?"

—Ellen Sandberg,  
North Vancouver,  
British Columbia

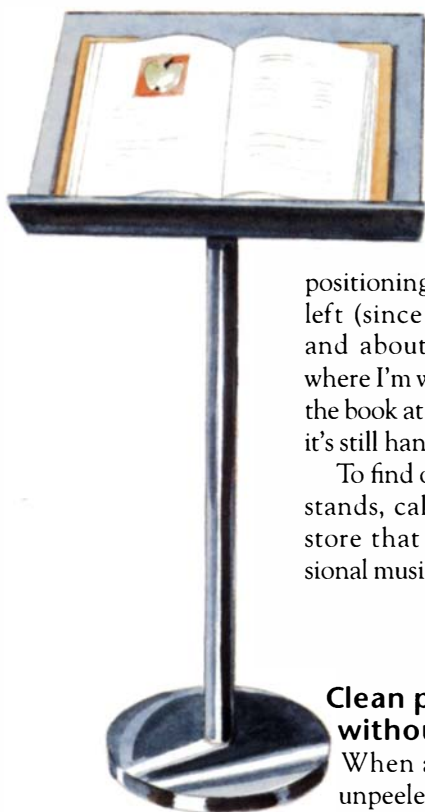
## Combine polenta ingredients before heating them

I have a good tip for preparing polenta. To avoid the tedious stirring over a hot stove, combine all the ingredients (cornmeal, liquid, butter) at once while they're cold. Then slowly bring to a simmer and stir occasionally until thickened. Finish with butter, your favorite cheese, or anything else. I find this method is foolproof.

—Larry Leibowitz,  
Parsippany, NJ

## Clean spice grinder with bread

I love to grind whole spices like clove, coriander, and nutmeg in my coffee grinder, but cleaning up between batches has always been a problem. To eliminate leftover flavor from the ground spices, I put about three-quarters of a slice of bread in the mill and process. The damp breadcrumbs pick up



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## TIPS

even the finest spice particles. In just a few seconds, the inside of the mill is clean and shiny, ready for the next batch of spices.

—Fredric A. Rhoads,  
Austin, TX

### Chop nuts quickly with a wooden mallet

Here's a great trick for chopping nuts in a jiffy. I put them in a plastic bag, close it up, and use a wooden kitchen mallet to break them into pieces. Just three or four strikes of the mallet and the job is done.

—Betsy Race,  
Euclid, OH

### Prepare the grill with a potato...

To keep delicate fish from sticking when you're grilling, try this trick on a clean, hot grill. Cut a raw baking potato in half, stab it through the skin with a long-handled fork, and rub the cut surface of the potato along the hot grill several times. The potato starch creates a sort of non-stick coating.

—Steve Aberle,  
Birch Creek, AK



*A wooden kitchen mallet makes quick work of chopping nuts. Seal the nuts in a plastic bag and hammer away.*

### ...or with an onion

When my grilling recipes involve an onion, I save the root end to clean and flavor the grill and to prevent food from sticking. Here's how: Slice off a thicker portion of the root than usual before peeling the onion. After allowing the grill to heat up, stick a barbecue fork through the root portion of the onion. Dip the onion in a bit of olive oil flavored with garlic and then rub the cut end on the grates of the grill.

—Yaron Kaminski,  
Ridgefield, CT

### Use a potato masher for fruit, too

The next time you need slightly mashed fruit for a recipe like strawberry shortcake, try using a potato masher. It squashes the fruit without turning it into juice or a purée, as a food processor will do.

—Peggy Makolondra,  
Sturgeon Bay, WI

### Cut fruit with an egg slicer

I don't like boiled eggs very much, but I have found another use for my egg slicer—it

works wonders on soft fruit. I use it all the time for kiwis since they're just the right size. It works for bananas, too.

—Zach Townsend, Irving, TX

### Keep a chopstick in the flour canister

To measure flour properly, I keep a round chopstick in my flour canister (it just fits at an angle) along with a ½-cup dry measure. When I need flour, I stir it up with the chopstick to aerate it, gently scoop it up with the measuring cup, and scrape off the excess with the chopstick. (A ¼-inch dowel can also work.) If I need a larger amount of flour, I use the ½-cup measure to spoon the flour into a 1-cup measure. This method ensures that I get an accurate measurement.

—Melissa Gray Hixy,  
Pittsville, VA

### Reheat rice in a vegetable steamer

I have a very simple way to reheat leftover rice: I put the rice in a vegetable steamer and steam it for a few minutes until hot. This method works very well for most kinds of rice, as long as it isn't pilaf or a variety that remains loose and separate after cooking (in which case the rice might fall through the steamer holes).

—Olivia Duchinsky,  
San Diego, CA

### Use a mustard jar for salad dressing

Here's an efficient way to use up the last hard-to-reach bits in a mustard jar. When I start to scrape the bottom, I use the jar to mix salad dressing. My favorite vinaigrette recipe calls for a teaspoon of mustard, so I just add all the other ingredients to the mustard jar, screw on the lid, and shake.

—Sidney Ackerman,  
New York, NY ♦



*Rub half a raw potato on the hot grill. The potato starch helps keep food from sticking.*



*An onion root end cleans and flavors the grill. Dip the onion in a bit of olive oil first for a nonstick coating.*

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# Pick the Cooking Method to Suit the **Chicken**

***Summer in a salad.***

*The hot peppers and colorful tomatoes in this chicken salad remind the author of sunny days spent in Italy.*



# Salad



Roasting, poaching, or grilling brings its own special character to three scrumptious chicken salads

BY JOANNE WEIR

A trip to Italy forever changed the way I think about chicken salad. There I encountered a dish called *pollo forte*, which literally translates as “strong chicken,” a reference to the hot peppers in the salad. Served outside in the sun with a glass of Chianti and some hearty bread, it was wonderful: pieces of tender, grilled chicken tossed with garlic, olives, tomatoes, and a tangy vinaigrette—now *this* was a chicken salad I could get excited about.

Thinking back on that meal, I realized that it was the grilling that really made a difference. The slightly smoky flavor from the grill allowed the meat to hold its own against the vivid flavors of the salad’s other ingredients. And the caramelized crust from the grill gave the meat added texture. Had the same salad been made with poached chicken, it wouldn’t have been nearly as good.



Photo: Holly Stewart

Joanne Weir grills chicken for the colorful salad at left. “I like to grill chicken over hardwood, but a gas grill works just fine.”

Yet tender, almost soft poached chicken is just right for another favorite chicken salad of mine, one with milder flavors of fruits and nuts and a creamy dressing made from mayonnaise and yogurt. Here, that smokiness that was so wonderful in the *pollo forte* would come across as harsh, and the texture of the chicken would distract from, rather than enhance, the other ingredients.

Now, whenever I set out to make chicken salad, I first think about how to cook the chicken. There's nothing wrong with throwing together a salad from leftover chicken, but if you're starting from scratch, it makes sense to suit the cooking method to the rest of your ingredients.

#### THE RIGHT CHICKEN FOR THE JOB

Even though these chicken salad recipes are chock full of delicious ingredients, the chicken still takes center stage, so start with a brand you like. Mass-produced birds can offer consistency, but a fresh chicken from a local producer may be of better quality.

**Roasting provides the most chicken flavor.** To me, roasting is the best method for bringing out a chicken's flavor. The skin protects the meat, keeping it juicy and flavorful. In my Chinese Chicken Salad, I brush the bird with soy sauce, molasses, and sesame oil to give it a more intense flavor during roasting. You can flavor a roast chicken for your own salad creation by rubbing it with a spice mixture, by stuffing it with a head of garlic, some rosemary, and a lemon or two, or by massaging an herb paste (like pesto) under the skin. At the very least, season the bird with ample salt and pepper and baste it regularly for the most flavorful chicken.

**Grilling lends a smoky sweetness.** The perfect summertime cooking method for chicken salads is grilling. The grilled flavor is especially good with vinaigrettes; the sweetness that comes from the charred spots where the meat touched the hot grill complements the dressing's tangy components, like vinegar or lemon juice. I like to cook the chicken over hardwood or mesquite for even more flavor, but a gas grill is convenient and will give good results. Likewise, boneless, skinless breasts are quickest to grill; but watch them carefully to avoid overcooking them.

**Poaching yields tender, delicate chicken.** For the Chicken Salad with Fruits & Nuts, I prefer to poach the chicken. Poaching usually means less chicken flavor, but the meat becomes lusciously moist—and without a lot of fuss. Plus, a subtle-tasting bird isn't necessarily a bad thing, especially when the other

ingredients are mild (such as the grapes, apples, and toasted nuts in this recipe). The texture of poached chicken also works really well with creamy dressings; it almost seems to absorb them.

When poaching, use chicken pieces with skin and bones intact; they add flavor and help keep the chicken moist. I often add aromatics to the poaching liquid to further imbue the chicken with flavor: a few sprigs of parsley or thyme, a bay leaf or two, a few peppercorns, chopped leeks, or slices of ginger.

A vinaigrette works well with the smoky sweetness of grilled chicken.

#### DRESS SALADS WITH MORE THAN JUST MAYO

I distinguish chicken salads from salads served with chicken by how the ingredients are handled. If everything gets dressed and tossed together, I call it a chicken salad. This is opposed to, say, a Caesar salad topped with strips of grilled chicken. (I

know it's a fine line, but it has to be drawn somewhere.) I also don't consider pasta or rice that happens to have some chicken tossed with it true chicken salad; those, in my opinion, are pasta salads and rice salads.

But just what we're tossing the salad with is open to interpretation. Mayonnaise, whether homemade or out of the jar, is the most traditional dressing. But the one-note richness of mayonnaise tends to mask the delicate flavor of chicken. Using yogurt, lemon juice, or sour cream in place of all or some of the mayonnaise not only adds flavor, but it also cuts back on the perceived richness of the dressing.

## Poach? Roast? Or Grill?

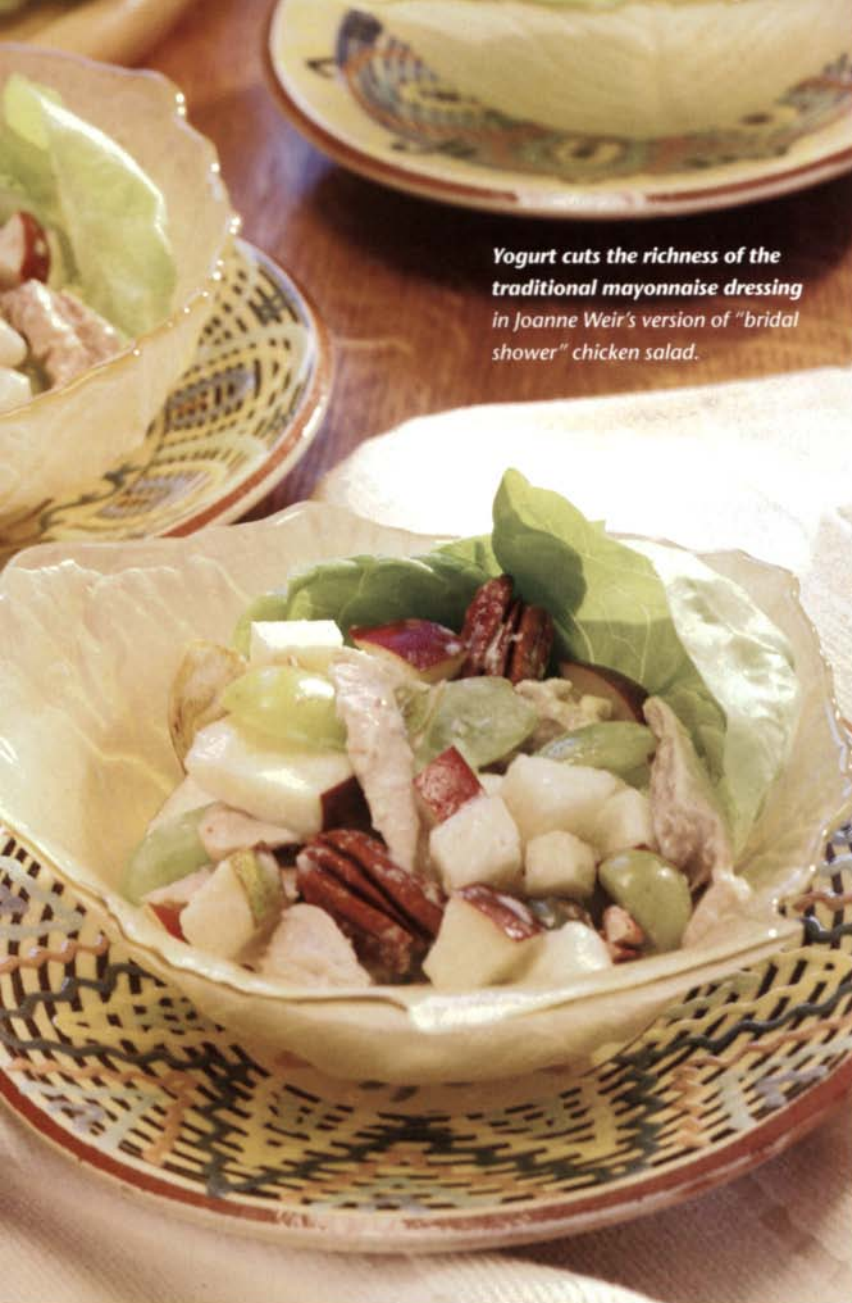


Poaching chicken makes it tender and mild. Keep the skin on for better flavor.



Roasting really brings out the flavor of the chicken. Use your hands to take the meat off the bones.





*Yogurt cuts the richness of the traditional mayonnaise dressing in Joanne Weir's version of "bridal shower" chicken salad.*

Vinaigrettes are another way to join the elements of the salad together. As opposed to creamy dressings, which can meld and mute the flavors of the salad, vinaigrettes shine a light on the individual ingredients, punching up the overall flavor of the salad. They can be as simple as some lemon juice whisked with olive oil or they can include garlic, herbs, and spices.

**Dress the chicken while it's still warm, but not too far ahead.** If you plan to serve the salad soon after cooking the chicken, then I recommend tossing the still-warm chicken with its dressing. The meat will absorb more of the dressing and will therefore have more flavor. But—and this is an important but—don't dress the chicken too far ahead. This is especially true for highly acidic dressings, like the one in my Chinese Chicken Salad, which continue to break down the proteins in the cooked chicken and will eventually turn it to mush. You can prepare all the elements of that salad ahead, but toss it at the last minute. The *pollo forte* actually benefits from some time spent in the vinaigrette, but that dressing is less acidic and the chicken pieces are sliced thicker.

Finally, while chicken salad is traditionally a sandwich filling, all these salads can stand on their own. The Chinese version looks pretty on the plate garnished with bright-green cilantro leaves. A lettuce cup is a civilized way to serve the Chicken Salad with Fruits & Nuts; the salad also makes a good sandwich. As for serving the *pollo forte*, reread the third sentence of this story. You don't have to eat it outside under the sun, but you'll be very happy if you do.

### **Tuscan Grilled Chicken & Pepper Salad (*Pollo Forte*)**

Yellow bell peppers and yellow cherry tomatoes make a stunning salad, but if you can't find them, simply use more of the red. *Serves six.*

*5 boneless, skinless chicken breast halves (about 6 oz. each)*  
*Olive oil for brushing*

*Salt and freshly ground black pepper*

*1 red bell pepper, cored, seeded, and very thinly sliced*

*1 yellow bell pepper, cored, seeded, and very thinly sliced*

*½ green bell pepper, cored, seeded, and very thinly sliced*

*1 poblano (also called pasilla) chile or other hot green chile, cored, seeded, and very thinly sliced*

*½ to 1 jalapeño, cored, seeded, and finely chopped*

*½ small red onion, thinly sliced*

*¼ cup red-wine vinegar*

*1 Tbs. balsamic vinegar*

*2 cloves garlic, finely chopped*

*½ tsp. dried chile flakes*

*¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil*

*20 red cherry tomatoes, halved*

*20 yellow cherry tomatoes, halved*

*¾ cup niçoise, kalamata, or other good-quality black olives, pitted*

*30 basil leaves, washed, dried, and torn into small pieces*

Heat the grill. Lightly brush the chicken with olive oil. Grill the chicken breasts on one side until almost firm to the touch, 4 to 5 min. Season with salt and pepper and then turn them over and continue to grill until cooked through, 3 to 4 min. Remove from the grill and



*Grilling gives the chicken a caramelized crust for added flavor and texture. Boneless chicken breasts cook and slice evenly.*

let cool. Cut the chicken on the diagonal into thin slices. Put the chicken in a large bowl along with the bell peppers, poblano and jalapeño chiles, and onion. Set aside.

In a small bowl, whisk together the two vinegars, garlic, dried chile flakes, and extra-virgin olive oil.

Toss the vinaigrette with the chicken and peppers and let stand at least 30 min. and up to an hour. Add the cherry tomatoes, olives, and basil. Gently toss the salad and season to taste with salt and pepper. Let the salad stand another 15 min. before serving to allow the flavors to meld.



*Ginger, scallion, garlic, and soy sauce give this chicken salad a Chinese accent. The eggplant is roasted at the same time as the chicken.*

### Roasted Chinese Chicken Salad with Eggplant

You can roast the chicken and eggplant ahead of time, but don't toss them with the vinaigrette until you're ready to serve or the chicken will turn mushy. *Serves six.*

**1 whole chicken (about 4 lb.)**  
**1 Tbs. soy sauce**  
**2 Tbs. molasses**  
**1 tsp. toasted sesame oil**  
**1½ lb. small Italian eggplant, sliced into ¼-inch-thick rounds**  
**Peanut or vegetable oil to brush on the eggplant**

#### FOR THE DRESSING:

**1½ Tbs. fresh minced ginger**  
**3 cloves garlic, chopped**  
**1 jalapeño chile, halved and seeded**  
**¼ cup rice vinegar**  
**5 Tbs. soy sauce**  
**1 Tbs. toasted sesame oil**  
**3 Tbs. peanut or vegetable oil**  
**1 cup loosely packed cilantro (tough stems removed), half coarsely chopped, half left whole**  
**6 scallions (white and green parts), thinly sliced on the diagonal**  
**Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**  
**1 Tbs. sesame seeds, toasted**

Heat the oven to 450°F. Put the chicken in a roasting pan, breast side up. In a small bowl, mix together the soy sauce, molasses, and sesame oil.

Line a baking sheet with foil or parchment. Lightly brush the eggplant slices with peanut or vegetable oil and put them on the baking sheet. Put the eggplant and the chicken in the oven. Bake the eggplant, turning once, until it's lightly browned and tender when poked with a knife, about 10 min. Set aside to cool. (Cut the slices in half if large.) Continue to roast the chicken for another 5 min. (for 15 min. total) at 450°F, and then reduce the heat to 375°F. Brush the chicken with the soy sauce mixture and continue to roast, basting frequently, until the skin is golden and crispy, the internal temperature of the thigh is 170°F, or the juices run clear when the thigh is pricked with a fork, another 55 to 65 min. Remove from the oven and let cool.

**Meanwhile, make the dressing.** In a blender or food processor, combine the ginger, garlic, jalapeño, rice vinegar, and soy sauce; process until smooth. With the motor running, add both the oils in a steady stream.

When the chicken is cool enough to handle, remove the meat from the bones, discarding the bones and skin (or eat the skin as a treat). Pull the meat into 2-inch strips, put it in a large bowl, and add the eggplant, chopped cilantro, and scallions. Add the dressing and toss gently. Season with salt and pepper. Garnish with the sesame seeds and whole cilantro leaves and serve immediately.

### Chicken Salad with Fruits & Nuts

This is what I call my bridal-shower chicken salad—it's bright and beautiful and feels oh so genteel. If you have sour cream on hand, replace half the yogurt with it to give the salad an even more luxurious feel. *Serves six.*

**3 to 3½ lb. bone-in chicken pieces**  
**1 small bunch flat-leaf parsley**  
**1 bay leaf**  
**2 Tbs. mayonnaise**  
**¼ cup plain yogurt**  
**4½ tsp. lemon juice**  
**1 tsp. honey**  
**1½ cups seedless green or red grapes, halved**  
**1 large tart red apple, halved, cored, and cut into ½-inch dice**  
**1 large ripe but firm Bartlett or Comice pear, halved, cored, and cut into ½-inch dice**  
**1 cup pecan halves, toasted**  
**Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Put in the chicken, parsley, and bay leaf and return to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the chicken is tender, about 25 min. for the breasts, 35 to 40 min. for the thighs and legs. Remove the chicken and set it aside until cool enough to handle.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, mix together the mayonnaise, yogurt, lemon juice, and honey.

When the chicken has cooled, remove and discard the skin and bones. Dice the meat into ½-inch pieces and add it to the bowl with the dressing, along with the grapes, apple, pear, and pecans. Toss together. Season with salt and pepper.

*Joanne Weir is a cooking teacher and cookbook author. Her most recent book is You Say Tomato (Broadway Books, 1998). ♦*

# A Rustic Bean Soup Is the Soul of A Provençal Summer Menu

Photo: Ben Fink



Vegetables, lamb, garlic, and basil team up in a dish that takes a cue from the garden

BY ALICE WATERS

## MENU

*Green Olive  
Tapenade Toasts*

*Grilled  
Artichoke Hearts*



*Soupe au Pistou  
Simmered with  
Lamb Shanks*

*Garden Lettuces  
with Baked Goat  
Cheese*



*Stuffed & Baked  
Peaches with  
Wild Blackberry  
Sauce*

Ever since Chez Panisse opened back in 1971, I've tried to get away whenever I can, to visit my friends in Provence and to learn more about the wonderful cooking of southern France. It was there that I met Lulu Peyraud, the proprietor of Domaine Tempier in Bandol, an ancient estate that makes some of my favorite wine in the world. Lulu and her husband, Lucien, gave me a warm-hearted welcome that made me feel as if I had come home to a second family. Whenever I return, I'm always struck by their deep connection to the beautiful corner of France where they live, by their appetite for life and their love for the pleasures of the table—and by Lulu's inspired cooking.

Lulu shops the way I love to shop—searching for what looks, smells, and feels most alive. And she cooks the way I love to cook—naturally, intuitively,



*An earthy starter. Coarsely chopped green olives and anchovies make a robust tapenade.*

never in haste, always out of love and appreciation for the food and her guests.

### CHOOSE THE BEST VEGETABLES THE MARKET (OR GARDEN) OFFERS

The summer meal I'm offering here is inspired by Lulu's philosophy in the kitchen, which has become my own: rely on the freshest fruits and vegetables you can find and on your senses and instincts.

The centerpiece of the meal is *soupe au pistou*, a magic medley of beans, vegetables, garlic, and lamb. The *pistou* (the Provençal version of pesto, pronounced pees-TOO) is an aromatic purée of basil, Parmesan, and olive oil, swirled into each bowl of soup just before serving. Preceding the soup are two simple appetizers: coarsely textured olive tapenade toasts and grilled artichokes.

Following the soup, I like to serve a refreshing salad of garden lettuces with baked goat cheese. Finally, for dessert, I always try to serve something that's light

and not too sweet. Baked peach halves stuffed with a mound of nutty filling are just right. The peaches are tender and sweet and bursting with the flavor of Beaufort de Venise, the sweet white wine they bake in.

A menu like this is adaptable to almost any kind of gathering. If you follow the schedule opposite, you can have nearly everything done before the first guest walks in the door. Another bonus is that none of the dishes has to be served at the precise moment it's ready, so you have leeway in setting the pace of the meal.

This menu was an unqualified success when I served it at a formal dinner last summer, but it is also a delicious way to entertain friends stopping by for a casual afternoon of good food and company. I can recall the hot day when my family and I arrived, sweaty and exhausted, for a visit with Lulu. She greeted us with this nourishing bean soup. Served with a bowl of *pistou*, it revived me like nothing else.

### MAKE THE SOUP IN ADVANCE FOR EVEN BETTER FLAVOR

A warm soup might seem like an unusual choice for a summer meal, but its textures and flavors are mesmerizing. The tomatoes and zucchini are the quintessential vegetables of summer, the beans add depth and texture, and the *pistou*, heady with basil, provides a sharp note of contrast to everything else. It's a great soup, even on a hot, humid day.

This soup is flexible and forgiving: substitutions are quite acceptable. I use whatever string beans are sweetest and most tender. For the shell beans, I always try to use fresh ones. If they aren't available, however, substitute dried beans. I suggest zucchini in the recipe, but don't hesitate to substitute another summer squash that looks fresher. The same goes for the tomatoes.



*Every bite is a tender morsel. Press the leaves of small, young artichokes onto the grill so they spread out like flowers.*

The soup can be made a day or two in advance. In fact, reheating marries the flavors even more. The one ingredient that suffers from repeated reheating is the pasta, so only add it in the very last stage of cooking but not to any of the soup you might be planning to save. The soup will thicken with each reheating, so add some hot water if you want to thin it.

### Green Olive Tapenade Toasts

If salt-packed anchovies and capers aren't available, use brine-packed capers and oil-packed anchovy fillets, choosing the meatiest ones. Yields 2 $\frac{2}{3}$  cups tapenade; serves eight.



*A vegetable and bean soup that's brimming with summer vegetables. Stir the basil-rich pistou into serving bowls, or put a bowl of it right on the table so guests can help themselves.*

2 whole salt-packed anchovies or 4 oil-packed anchovy fillets  
 2 cups (1 lb.) fruity green French-style olives, pitted (see Basics, p. 80, for pitting method)  
 ¼ cup salt-packed capers, rinsed and finely chopped  
 6 medium cloves garlic, minced  
 ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil; more for brushing  
 4 tsp. grappa (optional)  
 1 baguette or other good French bread, cut diagonally into ½ inch-thick slices

If using salt-packed anchovies, rinse them well with cold water. With the belly side up, run your finger from the head end down through the tail, removing the viscera and exposing the backbone. Lift out the bones. Soak the fillets in cold water for about 20 min. and pat dry. Mince the anchovies.

With a chef's knife or in a food processor, chop the olives to a slightly coarse texture. In a bowl, mix the olives, minced anchovies, capers, garlic, olive oil, and grappa, if using. Taste. Let sit for 1 hour to let the flavors develop.

Prepare a charcoal or wood fire. Brush the bread slices with olive oil and grill on both sides. (You can grill the bread in a broiler or on the stovetop using a ridged pan, if that's easier.) Spread the tapenade on the toast.

### Grilled Artichoke Hearts

Some small artichokes are so young and tender that they have practically no choke. Others are small but mature, with tougher chokes that must be removed. For trimming,

## Advance planning for easy entertaining

The menu does have a number of components, but you can do a lot of the preparation and cooking ahead of time.

### Three days ahead

- ◆ If using dried beans, soak them overnight

### Two days ahead

- ◆ Make the soup (but don't add the pasta)

### A day ahead

- ◆ Make the *pistou*
- ◆ Make the tapenade
- ◆ Marinate the goat cheese (cover and refrigerate)
- ◆ Make the breadcrumb coating
- ◆ Make the blackberry sauce

### Morning of the meal

- ◆ Wash the lettuces
- ◆ Make the vinaigrette
- ◆ Make the peach stuffing
- ◆ Peel, halve, and stuff the peaches

### Afternoon of the meal

- ◆ Prepare the artichokes
- ◆ Simmer the artichokes
- ◆ Get your grill ready

### Just before guests arrive

- ◆ Grill the artichokes
- ◆ Grill the bread for tapenade toasts
- ◆ Reheat the soup and add the pasta

### During the meal

- ◆ Coat and bake the goat cheese; assemble the salad
- ◆ Bake the peaches



*A refreshing followup to a wholesome soup. Baked goat cheese salad is easy to assemble while still attending to guests.*

use a stainless-steel knife and rub each cut surface with a lemon half. *Serves eight.*

**¼ cup olive oil**  
**4 to 5 medium cloves garlic**  
**6 sprigs fresh thyme**  
**1 Tbs. salt; more for seasoning**  
**1 medium lemon, thinly sliced, plus the juice of ½ lemon**  
**16 small artichokes (or 8 large artichokes)**

In a large nonreactive pot, combine 2 quarts cold water with the olive oil, garlic, thyme, salt, and lemon slices. Bring to a boil over high heat and then lower to a gentle simmer.

To prepare the artichokes, peel away the darker outer leaves until you see the pale green-yellow of the tender inner leaves. If using small artichokes, trim off about ½ inch of the tops and trim the tough end from the stem. With a sharp-edged spoon, scrape out the choke, if there is any. If using large artichokes, slice off the upper two-thirds of the artichoke and cut off the stem. Pare away the remaining tough leaves from the base. Cut in half lengthwise and scrape out the choke fibers.

Prepare a charcoal or wood fire. Immerse the artichokes in the pot with the simmering brine. Simmer gently until cooked through and fork-tender, 15 to 20 min. Drain the artichokes on paper towels and set aside until cool enough to handle.

When the grill is hot, for small artichokes, open out the leaves and press them onto the grill so that they flatten slightly. Cut larger artichokes into quarters and then grill. When nicely browned, remove them from the grill and season with lemon juice and salt.

## Soupe au Pistou Simmered with Lamb Shanks

You may need to call your butcher to reserve the lamb shanks for this sustaining bean soup. *Serves eight, with plenty of leftovers; yields 1 cup pistou.*

**3 cups shell beans (if fresh, try half cranberry beans and half another white variety; if dried, try cannellini or other white runner variety)**  
**2 lamb shanks (about 2 lb. total)**  
**2 Tbs. olive oil**  
**2 to 3 Tbs. kosher or sea salt**  
**6 large cloves garlic, crushed**  
**2½ lb. ripe tomatoes (a mix of red and yellow if possible), peeled and coarsely chopped (about 6 cups)**  
**2 cups peeled, seeded, and cubed butternut or other winter squash**  
**3 yellow onions, diced**  
**2 carrots, peeled and diced (about 1 cup)**  
**1½ lb. fresh green or yellow beans, or a mix**  
**½ lb. green zucchini (1 large), quartered lengthwise and sliced ¾ inch thick**  
**1 cup small or medium pasta (riso, ditalini, penne)**

### FOR THE PISTOU:

**4 medium cloves garlic**  
**2 tsp. kosher or sea salt**

**2 cups packed basil leaves, washed and dried**  
**½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese**  
**½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**

If using dried beans, rinse and soak them overnight in cold water. Drain. Cover with cold water by 2 inches. Bring to a boil over medium heat, simmer 15 min., drain, and set aside.

In a stockpot that's wide enough to fit the lamb shanks on their sides (or a skillet), brown the shanks well in the olive oil on all sides. Add 3 quarts cold water to the pot. Bring to a boil, uncovered, and thoroughly skim the foam from the surface. Add the salt, garlic, and one-third of the tomatoes (about 2 cups). If using dried shell beans, add them now. Adjust the heat to a simmer and cook for 45 min. Add the squash, onions, carrots, green beans, zucchini, the remaining 4 cups tomatoes, and the shell beans, if using fresh. Bring the pot to a boil. Lower the heat and continue to simmer until the lamb meat is very tender, the beans are soft, and the soup has developed a velvety texture, about 2 to 2½ hours more. Remove the shanks and pull the meat from the bones. Cut the meat into small pieces and return them to the soup.

When you're ready to serve the soup, bring it to a boil and add the pasta. Cook at a light boil until the pasta is tender, about 10 min. The soup should be thick, but if too thick, add hot water. Taste for salt and serve with a dollop of *pistou* stirred into each bowl.

**To make the *pistou***—With a mortar and pestle (or in a food processor), mash the garlic and salt. Add the basil and work to a paste. Work in the Parmesan. Slowly mix in the oil to bind the sauce. Taste for salt.

## Garden Lettuces with Baked Goat Cheese

*Serves eight, with two cheese rounds each.*

**3 small logs fresh goat cheese (12 to 14 oz. total)**  
**½ cup extra-virgin olive oil; more as needed**  
**3 to 4 sprigs fresh thyme**  
**About 1 cup fine fresh breadcrumbs**  
**1 Tbs. chopped fresh marjoram or thyme (or a mix of the two)**  
**2 to 3 Tbs. sherry vinegar or red-wine vinegar**  
**Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**  
**¾ lb. garden lettuces: small oak leaf, red leaf, arugula, mâche, and any other tender lettuce greens, washed and dried well**

Slice the goat cheese into 16 or more disks ½ inch thick. In a small dish, arrange the disks snugly and pour the olive oil over them (add more if needed to cover). Add the sprigs of thyme, cover with plastic, and marinate in the refrigerator for a few hours or overnight.

Heat the oven to 400°F. In a small bowl, mix the breadcrumbs with the marjoram or thyme. Remove the goat cheese from the marinade (reserving the oil) and coat with the breadcrumb mixture. Line a baking sheet with foil and put the cheese disks on it. Bake until the cheese is lightly bubbling and golden brown, 6 to 8 min.

In a small bowl, whisk the vinegar and ½ cup of the olive oil from the marinade. Taste for balance, adding more vinegar if necessary. Season with salt and pepper.

Toss the lettuces with the vinaigrette and arrange the greens on salad plates. On each mound of lettuce, lay two slices of goat cheese, browner side up.

## Lamb shanks and beans give the soup depth



*Brown the lamb shanks to give the soup more flavor. The author uses a cast-iron skillet rather than a stockpot to caramelize the entire surface.*



*The long, slow simmer makes the flesh meltingly tender. The meat is then easy to pull off the bones.*

## Stuffed & Baked Peaches with Wild Blackberry Sauce

Amaretti cookies, also called Italian macaroons, are available at specialty markets. Beaumes de Venise is a fortified sweet wine from southern France. A Sauternes can also work. If you can't find wild blackberries for the sauce, use the freshest blackberries your market offers. *Serves eight.*

6 Tbs. unblanched whole almonds (2½ oz.)  
6 amaretti cookies  
6 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened; more for the baking dish  
2 Tbs. sugar  
1 large egg yolk  
2 to 3 Tbs. Beaumes de Venise  
4 very large (or 8 small) ripe peaches, peeled

### WILD BLACKBERRY SAUCE:

¼ cup sugar  
¼ cup water  
1 cup wild or cultivated blackberries  
Lemon juice to taste  
Kirsch to taste (optional)

**To make the stuffing**—Heat the oven to 375°F. Lightly toast the almonds just enough to bring out their flavor, about 5 min. Using a rolling pin, crush the amaretti between sheets of waxed paper until they're in tiny chunks but not powdered. Chop the almonds finely with a knife or a few quick pulses in the processor. In an electric mixer, beat the butter until very light and fluffy. Add the sugar and then the egg yolk and continue beating until the mixture is again light and very fluffy, 4 to 5 min. Beat in the almonds and crushed amaretti cookies. Flavor with a few drops of the Beaumes de Venise.



**To bake the peaches**—Heat the oven to 375°F. Halve the peaches and remove the pits. Lightly butter a baking dish that fits the peach halves snugly and arrange the peaches in it. Stuff each with a rounded tablespoon or more of stuffing. Add a splash of Beaumes de Venise to the dish and bake, basting the peaches with the juices in the dish, until tender when pierced with the tip of a sharp knife, 30 to 40 min. The topping should have a gentle gratinéed look.

**To make the sauce**—In a small pot over medium heat, dissolve the sugar in the water. Bring to a boil and cook 5 min. Cool. Meanwhile, purée the blackberries in a food mill or processor. Press the purée through a fine sieve to remove the seeds. Combine the purée with the sugar syrup. If the berries aren't tart enough, season with lemon juice. Add kirsch to taste and serve the sauce with the baked peaches.



*Baked peach halves cradle a crunchy almond filling for a light dessert. To peel peaches, immerse them in a pot of boiling water, and then plunge into an ice-water bath. With some coaxing from a paring knife, the peel should slip right off.*

Alice Waters is the founder and proprietor of *Chez Panisse* in Berkeley, California. ♦



*Fresh, tender shell beans are worth seeking out. If none are available, use dried beans that have been soaked overnight.*



## Wine Choices

### Choose lively, lusty wines that aren't too tannic

The bold, pure flavors of this menu epitomize Alice Waters' style. Mediterranean in tone, with plenty of peak-of-season produce and other top-notch ingredients, these dishes call for lively, full-flavored, somewhat rustic wines that won't dominate with heavy oak or tannin.

To start, Alice suggests clean, fresh whites, like California's Etude Pinot Blanc, or Nozze d'Oro from Regaleali

in Sicily. Considering the tangy salad with strong herbal accents, I'd also include a California Sauvignon Blanc, like Spottswoode or Flora Springs' Soliloquy.

Moving up a notch in quality, Alice recommends Bandol Rosé from Domaine Tempier; I'd add Château d'Aqueria's Tavel Rosé, also from France. Fruity and refreshing, these wines balance the saltiness of the tapenade toasts, and they

can stand up to the smoky grilled artichokes, too.

With the *soupe au pistou*, Alice proposes Châteauneuf-du-Pape from Vieux Télégraphe, Sky Zinfandel from Napa, or Isole e Olena Chianti Classico. I'd also like Guigal's Gigondas, or for a rock-bottom price, Vichon Méditerranée's Syrah.

*Rosina Tinari Wilson teaches and writes about wine in San Francisco's Bay Area.*



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# How to Cook a Roast on the Grill

Grill-roasted beef, pork, and lamb are juicy, tender, and kissed with smoke

BY MOLLY STEVENS

In my mind, grilling has always been synonymous with quick-cooking fare like steaks, burgers, and chicken breasts. But as much as I love the ease and speed of these casual outdoor meals, I sometimes want to cook something more substantial without giving up the pleasure of cooking outdoors. So I've learned to use my grill as a sort of an outdoor oven, cooking good-sized roasts like beef tenderloin and pork loin over indirect heat. Once you have a good fire going, this cooking method takes no longer than roasting in the oven, and the results are even better. The meat is beautifully moist, juicy, and perfumed with that unmistakable taste of summer smoke.

## CHOOSE NATURALLY TENDER ROASTS

The best cuts to use for grill-roasting are those that you'd ordinarily roast at high heat in the oven—cuts from the loin, tenderloin, sirloin, leg, and round. I generally stick with a small to medium roast (2 to 6 pounds) since I can usually cook it without refueling the fire. (A good charcoal fire will last over an hour and a half—plenty of time to cook a roast this size.) You can certainly use the same method to cook larger roasts, like a standing rib, but you'll need to pay more attention to the fire.

Avoid overly tough or fatty cuts such as the shoulder or brisket; these require the gentle, slow heat of a braise or the low, smoky heat of traditional barbecue to become tender. I also like to stick with boneless roasts when grilling because I'm often serving dinner outside, and it's



*For indirect grilling, bank the hot coals to one side of the grill. The fire is ready when the coals are glowing and a fine layer of ash covers them, as shown above.*



*Cook the roast on the cool side of the grill. With the grill's lid on, the roast will have a steady supply of moderate indirect heat, but it won't burn before it finishes cooking.*



*A rolled and tied boneless lamb leg, seasoned with an herb rub, cooks about an hour and half on the grill. Let it rest for 10 to 15 minutes before carving.*



*Cook your whole menu on the grill—here it's beef tenderloin served with grilled vegetables. Pick a side dish that doesn't need split-second timing since the roasting method isn't ultra-precise.*

easier not to have to fuss with complicated carving. A good solution for a cut of meat like a leg of lamb is to order it boned and rolled into a neat cylindrical roast.

**Before roasting, rub the meat with seasoning for a delicious layer of flavor.** While a handful of coarse salt and freshly cracked pepper will do, I have a lot of fun experimenting with spice and herb blends (see recipes opposite). I don't usually bother with marinades because their flavors and tenderizing effects barely penetrate the surface of a large cut of meat, they tend to be messy, and more important, they cause flare-ups. The one exception is pork loin: the very lean meat does benefit from a few hours in a simple yogurt marinade. In this case, I wipe off the excess marinade before roasting and then coat the loin with a spice rub to get a savory crust.

#### **A LARGE KETTLE GRILL WORKS BEST**

With a 22-inch or larger kettle grill, you'll have plenty of room to accommodate both the fire and the meat. The dome of a kettle grill cover creates a perfect convection environment of heat and smoke to roast the meat evenly. I'm also convinced that the best fuel for grill-roasting is hardwood charcoal because it gives you the cleanest and longest lasting fire. You can use a gas grill for grill-roasting as long as you're able to heat only one side and set the roast on the other side.

**Get a good bed of coals going on one side of the grill for an indirect fire.** When the coals are burning well, set the roast on the other side of the grate. The

## Cuts and cooking times for roasts

Narrow roasts generally need a total cooking time of 35 to 50 minutes at an average temperature of 350°F, as they're all about the same thickness. The best way to judge the cooking time of a fatter, rounder roast, however, is to figure 15 to 20 minutes per pound. Variables like weather or

an uneven fire can affect cooking times, so check the temperature in the thickest part of the meat with an instant-read thermometer. Remove lamb and beef at 125°F for medium-rare meat; pork at 135°F. Temperatures rise about 10 degrees during a 10- to 15-minute rest.

Shape of roast	Type of roast	Approximate cooking time
<b>Long and narrow</b> (2 to 5 pounds)	center-cut pork loin beef tenderloin beef strip roast beef tri-tip	35 to 50 minutes total cooking time (rotate after 20 minutes)
<b>Fat and round</b> (3 to 6 pounds)	beef top round roast beef sirloin roast sirloin tip rolled, tied leg of lamb rolled, tied double pork loin roast	15 to 20 minutes per pound (rotate halfway through)



*Roast a spice-rubbed pork loin for dinner one night, and save some slices for lunch the next day.*

top and bottom vents should be damped almost all the way—but not entirely, or the fire will go out. This technique gives you cooking temperatures around 325° to 375°F, perfect for roasting meat. If your grill has an external thermometer, expect it to read higher since it registers the average temperature inside the grill, not just the temperature of the side farthest from the fire. I set a regular oven thermometer on the grill over on the cool side to monitor the temperature.

**Try not to open the grill too often.** The first few times I tried grill-roasting, I couldn't resist peeking quite frequently. Lifting the lid isn't catastrophic, but it does let a lot of heat escape and causes the fire to burn down more quickly, which increases roasting time. Now I just check every 25 to 30 minutes.

**Rotate the roast once halfway through cooking.** The side of the roast closest to the fire will brown a bit more quickly, so rotating the roast will help ensure



*Juicy slices of herbed lamb are reason enough to try grill-roasting.*

that it cooks evenly. Use the chart at left to estimate total cooking time so that you can turn halfway through. As with roasting any meat, the best doneness test is to stick an instant-read thermometer in the thickest part of the roast. Once the meat is within about 10 degrees of the desired temperature, you can roll it directly over the coals for a few minutes, turning it so all sides get a nicely browned crust. Browning the roast after cooking (rather than before) is unconventional, but I prefer it because it takes much less time since the meat is already hot. It also allows me to only brown the meat if it looks like it needs it. Then let the meat rest for 10 to 15 minutes before carving.

**Plan a flexible menu to go with the roast.** Since grill-roasting isn't an exact science (variables like wind and cool weather could slow things down), prepare salads, slaws, and salsas that can wait, and give guests something to nibble on.

## Master Recipe for Grill-Roasting

Try this method with a roast you usually cook in the oven and then experiment with other cuts of meat.

**2- to 6-lb. beef, lamb, or pork roast, rolled and tied if necessary**  
**Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper, or a prepared herb or spice rub (see recipes at right)**

Prepare a fire on one side of the grill using enough charcoal to create a fire bed that's about 6 inches deep and two to three times the width of the roast. Make sure that the vents are clear of ash before lighting the fire. With the grill uncovered, allow the fire to burn down until a light layer of white ash covers some of the coals and the rest are red-hot, 35 to 45 min. Meanwhile, season the roast generously with salt and pepper or a spice rub.

Arrange the grate so that the side opening (if there is one) is aligned with the coals in case you need to add

charcoal later. Let the grate heat up for 5 min. and then set the roast on the side that's farthest from the fire; set an oven thermometer next to it. Cover the grill, close the vents most of the way, and cook (see suggested times in the chart opposite).

Check the grill temperature after 20 min. It should be between 325° and 375°F. Adjust if necessary by opening or closing the vents (more air will cause the fire to burn hotter and more quickly; less air will make the temperature drop.) If the fire seems to be burning out at any time, add more charcoal and open the vents a bit.

Halfway through cooking, use tongs or a meat fork to turn and rotate the roast to help it cook evenly. Turn the roast so the side that was farthest from the fire is now closest to it, but keep it on the cool side of the grill.

Check the roast with an instant-read thermometer to determine when it's done. The internal temperature of beef and lamb, taken at the middle of the thickest section, should be 125°F for medium rare, and pork should be 135°F. (I cook my pork slightly less than the USDA's recommended 160° to keep it juicy.) The temperature of the roasts will rise about 10 degrees as they rest off the fire. When the meat has reached the desired doneness, use tongs or a meat fork to roll it briefly over the hot side of the fire to sear the outside, turning it until all sides are seared, about 2 min. per side. Cover the meat with foil and let it rest for 10 to 15 min. before carving.

*Molly Stevens cooks outdoors year-round in Vermont (brrrr). She's a contributing editor to Fine Cooking.* ♦

## Savory rubs for grilled roasts

When seasoning a roast for the grill, use a generous hand with coarse salt and freshly ground pepper or try one of these rubs. Brush very lean cuts, like tenderloin, with oil before seasoning.

### Herb Rub for Lamb or Beef

*Yields ½ cup, enough for a 5-pound roast.*

**½ cup lightly packed flat-leaf parsley or basil leaves**  
**2 Tbs. fresh rosemary leaves**  
**Grated zest of 1 lemon**  
**4 cloves garlic**  
**2 Tbs. cracked or crushed black peppercorns**  
**2 Tbs. lightly crushed mustard seeds**  
**2 Tbs. olive oil**  
**2 tsp. salt**

Combine all the ingredients in a small food processor (or mortar and pestle) and process to a smooth paste. If you're rolling and tying a boneless leg of lamb yourself, spread some of the rub on the inside of the meat before you tie it.

### Marinade & Spice Rub for Pork

*Yields ¼ cup spice rub, enough for a 2- to 3-pound roast.*

#### FOR THE MARINADE:

**1 cup plain yogurt**  
**1 shallot, minced**  
**2 cloves garlic, minced**  
**2 tsp. Dijon-style mustard**  
**2 tsp. fresh lime juice**  
**½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper**  
**⅛ tsp. salt**

#### FOR THE SPICE RUB:

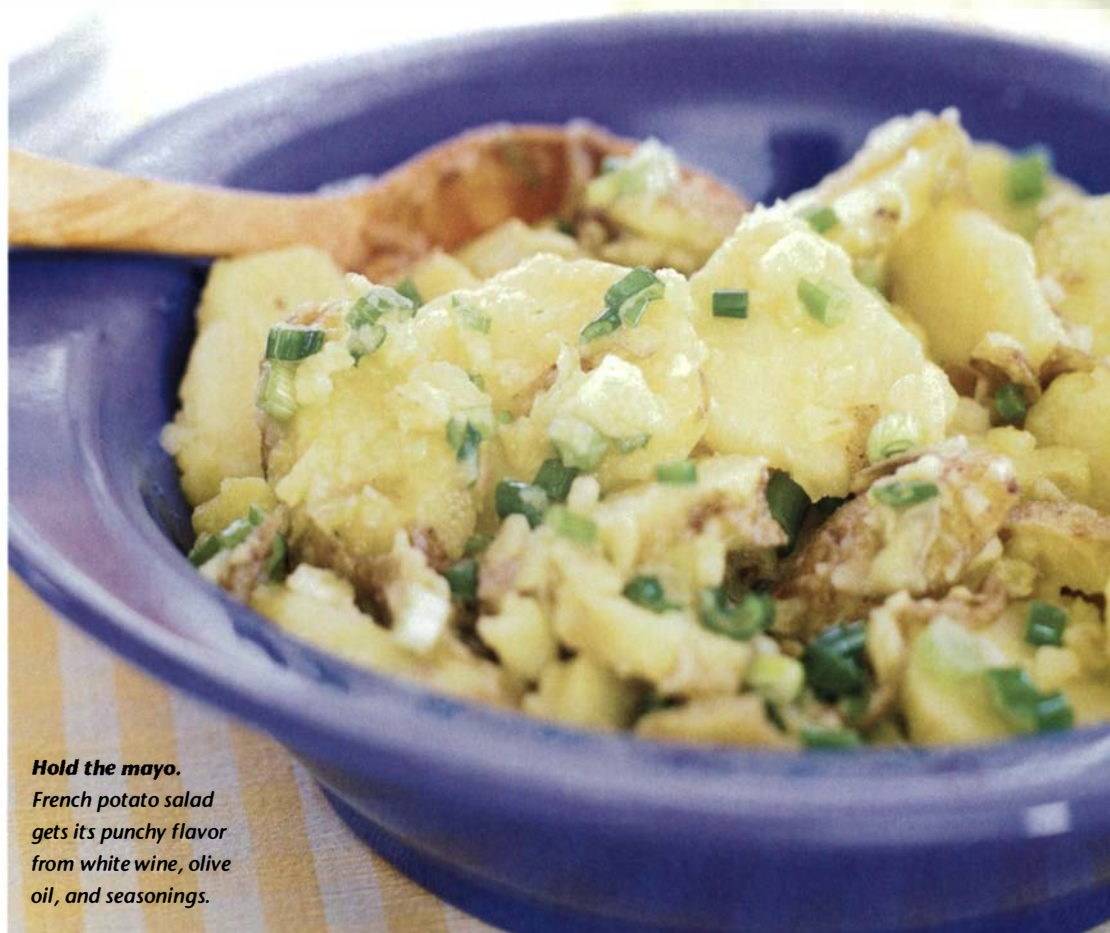
**2 Tbs. cumin seeds, preferably toasted**  
**1 Tbs. dill seeds**  
**1 tsp. ground cinnamon**  
**1 tsp. freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 tsp. salt**  
**⅛ tsp. dried chile flakes**

Combine all the marinade ingredients in a small bowl and rub over the pork loin. Cover the pork and refrigerate for 4 to 6 hours. Meanwhile, prepare the spice rub by combining all the ingredients in a spice grinder. Just before grilling, scrape off the excess marinade and smear the pork with the spice rub.





Jean-Louis Gerin thinks his mom's recipe for potato salad is the best.



**Hold the mayo.**  
French potato salad gets its punchy flavor from white wine, olive oil, and seasonings.

# Classic French-Style Potato Salad

Douse warm potatoes, first with white wine and then olive oil, for results that are tangy to the core

BY JEAN-LOUIS GERIN

**O**oh la la! *Mon Dieu!* You're not saying.... What is this world coming to?" The word was out—Americans were putting mayonnaise in their potato salad. My cousin Gérard had seen it on a ski trip to Colorado. I was ten years old when the rumor buzzed though our tiny village in the Alps at the speed of a downhill racer.

To us in the provinces, mayonnaise on potato salad was a bizarre idea, and everyone had something to say about it. It was right after this that I started to pay closer attention to my mother's version of potato salad, the one my whole family took for granted because it seemed so easy.

Photos: Maura McEvoy

The secret is dressing the potatoes while they're still warm. What makes French potato salad different from the kind made with mayonnaise is that you're building layers of flavor, starting with giving the potatoes themselves a shot of intense flavor, rather than just coating them with a dressing.

The key to "layering" is to douse the potatoes while they're still warm with a sharp, strong liquid—usually wine or vinegar. The finished salad is light and tangy, with the potatoes taking on an almost creamy texture from soaking up the liquid and drawing it right to their centers.

Yukon Gold potatoes are the best choice because they're absorbent but firm. I like to keep the skins on, both for the look and for the flavor. A high-starch baking potato like an Idaho is great at absorbing flavors, too, but it's more apt to crumble when you toss it, and it can feel grainy in a potato salad. Red-skinned potatoes (lower in starch and more likely to stay intact) don't absorb as much of the dressing as I like them to, leaving a little too much oil at the bottom of the bowl, but they're a good second choice.

To get the best flavor, boil potatoes in plenty of well-salted water until they're fork-tender. I find that when I bake potatoes for this salad, they actually soak up too much liquid, leaving none behind as a dressing. Baking is fine if you like your potatoes a little on the crumbly, dry side.

Be sure the potatoes are warm when you toss them with the wine and oil so they sponge up the most flavor. It's very important not to let the potatoes get cool before you start to dress them. And toss gently: hot potatoes fall apart more easily than cool ones. You can even cook the potatoes in advance, whole and unpeeled. Before slicing and dressing them, warm them through in boiling, salted water.

First comes white wine or vinegar, along with salt and pepper. This initial absorption is key for the best flavor. Then comes the olive oil to finish the dressing. While you don't actually make a vinaigrette, the elements of a vinaigrette are absorbed by the potatoes. Then, after the potatoes have cooled slightly, you toss in the rest of the ingredients. I prefer white pepper here; to me, it looks better than black.

Serve this potato salad at room temperature. The oil will stay liquid, which makes for the best taste and texture (and for easier serving), and the flavors of all the ingredients are better when they're not muted from the cold.



*Hot potatoes make great salad, so slice them with a very sharp knife while they're still quite warm.*



*The warm slices drink up the wine or vinegar. They're fragile, though, so toss gently.*

## French-Style Potato Salad

Wine flavors are subtle but important in this salad, so use a wine you wouldn't mind drinking. I like to keep the potato skins on both for looks and nutrition. Serves four as a side dish.

**2 lb. Yukon Gold potatoes, scrubbed but not peeled**  
**1½ cups dry white wine (or ½ cup white-wine vinegar)**  
**Salt and freshly ground white pepper to taste**  
**½ cup extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 Tbs. minced shallot**  
**⅔ cup chopped scallions**

Boil the whole unpeeled potatoes in generously salted water until fork-tender, 20 to 30 min., depending on size. As soon as you can handle the potatoes but while they're still warm, slice them just under ½ inch thick with a very sharp knife.

In a small saucepan over medium heat, boil the wine until it's reduced by half. (If using vinegar, don't cook it.) Sprinkle the salt, pepper, and hot reduced wine (or the vinegar) over the warm potatoes; toss gently. Add the olive oil, tossing just until combined, and then add the shallots and scallions. Taste and adjust the seasonings. Serve at room temperature.

## VARIATIONS

Variations on this potato salad are endless, but here are a few that I especially like. Follow the basic recipe above—just omit the scallions and substitute one of these combinations.

- ◆ Chopped tomato, diced crisped bacon, and hard-cooked egg.
- ◆ Chopped anchovies and sliced roasted red peppers.
- ◆ Chopped olives, minced garlic, and cubed chicken or turkey.
- ◆ Lemon juice, caviar, *crème fraîche*, and snipped chives.
- ◆ Paprika, capers, and smoked salmon. (To avoid cooking the salmon, don't add it until the salad is at room temperature.)



*The ingredients in this salad taste best at room temperature.*

Jean-Louis Gerin is the chef-owner of Restaurant Jean-Louis in Greenwich, Connecticut. ◆

# Outdoor Kitchens

## Make Cooking a Breeze



# More than just barbecue areas, these kitchens are designed for full-tilt cooking in the fresh air

BY AMY ALBERT

Most cooks respond to the lure of warm weather by cooking more on the grill and by setting the dinner table on the patio instead of in the dining room. But some stretch the idea even further: they've built actual outdoor kitchens where they can do all their kitchen tasks in the fresh air, enjoy the scenery, entertain calmly, clean up easily, and avoid the summer swelter of an indoor kitchen.

I talked to four of these fresh-air-loving cooks about working in their kitchens. Some of their setups are bare bones, with a stainless-steel sink, a picnic table as a work area, and a propane-fueled burner. Others are more luxurious, with wood-burning ovens, poured concrete countertops, and set-in sinks. All four kitchens have one thing in common, however: they're fully functional work spaces that marry efficiency and pleasure.

## Nestled in a Napa Valley Garden

The freshest herbs for a pizza or a vegetable stew are close at hand when Pam Kramlich cooks outdoors. Stepping into her garden, you understand at once why she and her husband have a kitchen there. Inspiration came one day when Pam was standing in her favorite spot, enjoying the view of Mount St. Helena and the vineyards, wishing she could savor the vista more often. It hit her—why not build a kitchen here?

Paul Bertolli, a family friend and a *Fine Cooking* contributing editor, designed the kitchen. There's a wood-burning oven, a grill, and propane burners. All the facings are from stones pulled out of the adjacent vineyards. The Kramlichs use this kitchen from May to October, for weeknight suppers for two to dinner parties for 140. And they enjoy not having to worry about cleanup. "A neighbor's children made pizza dough here last week," says Pam, "and I didn't give it a second thought."



A serious kitchen for a seriously beautiful setting. Heavy-duty propane burners, a wood-burning oven, and dappled sunlight are three terrific features of this Napa Valley kitchen owned by Pam Kramlich (at left). The oven turns out pies, pizzas, stews, and roasts. Timber is stored in cubbies just below.



## Thailand Transported

Su-Mei Yu, a Thai restaurant owner and food historian in San Diego, turned her back patio into a kitchen so that she could recreate the kitchen that she remembered from growing up in Thailand. Her setup is under a lean-to, and it's simple: a wide, deep, freestanding stainless-steel sink, a propane burner bought at a nearby Costco (the intense flame is perfect for wok stir-frying), and a picnic table that her husband, Italo Scanga, a painter and ceramic artist, once used as a work table. Yu, who's passionate about tracing the roots of traditional Thai recipes, squats on the floor to grind her own spices, and she uses an old-style Thai brazier for long-cooking stews. Ceiling fluorescents light the kitchen area after dark, "just like in the night markets in Thailand," says Yu. Ceramics and flea-market treasures abound.

Thanks to San Diego's mild climate, this kitchen gets used every day and year-round. And Su-Mei and Italo (who loves to make spicy dishes from his Calabrian homeland) often cook together. "Italo turns on the opera full blast," she says, "and that's when the good time really starts."



*A spacious work table offers plenty of room to prepare a feast.*



*Su-Mei Yu and her husband, Italo Scanga, use this kitchen every day. Italo likes cooking traditional Calabrian fish, but the banana leaf he'll roast it in is a nod to Thailand.*



*The organic produce on Berry's farm grows steps away from her outdoor kitchen.*

## Perched Above the Pacific

The outdoor kitchen is what sold Gerri Gilliland on the Malibu house she bought a few years ago.

"It's very serene; I call it my medicine," says Gilliland of the mountain, canyon, and Pacific Ocean views she enjoys when she grills steaks for a few friends, teaches cooking classes, or tests barbecue recipes for one of her four Los Angeles area restaurants. Gilliland has three grills: one for cooking for a crowd, another for weeknight suppers ("I can make dinner for two on just one and a half logs"), and "a regular gas grill for when I'm feeling lazy." There's a wood-burning Mexican beehive oven, great for roasting whole fish and tandoori-style chicken. "The kitchen is roomy enough for big groups, and cozy enough for small ones," making it suitable for both work and entertaining. "Because I work long hours at my restaurants, spending as much time outdoors as possible means a lot to me," she says.

*"On a brisk night, everyone can warm up around the fire as the food cooks," says Gerri Gilliland.*



*Elizabeth Berry equipped her outdoor kitchen in the northern New Mexico desert with flea-market finds and secondhand restaurant equipment. Out from under the overhang there's a beehive-shaped wood-burning adobe oven called an homo.*

## New Mexican Wilderness

"It's an outgrowth of living in the desert, built out of need," says Elizabeth Berry of her outdoor kitchen in the Chama wilderness of northern New Mexico. Berry's house has thick walls of adobe, "a natural air conditioner in summer," but also a natural heat retainer. Cooking inside makes the house unbearably hot in the warmer months, so from May to November, Berry prepares all her meals outdoors.

The kitchen, which looks out onto 1,000-year-old Anasazi cliff dwellings, is under an overhang once used to shelter the organic vegetables and heirloom beans that Berry grows and sells to restaurants and at farmers' markets. There's a three-burner propane stove, a propane oven, and an enamel sink. Work tables from a bakery provide plenty of workspace for Berry and her chef friends, who come to enjoy the wilderness, to forage from the garden, and to cook.

The dirt floor needs just a hosing, which also cools the kitchen and wets down the desert dust. Aside from the surroundings, one of the best things about cooking outdoors is minimal cleanup. "We make a lot of traditional Mexican dishes here," says Berry. "Grease can splatter everywhere, and no one cares."

Amy Albert is an associate editor for Fine Cooking. ♦

the Fruit  
of summer  
shines in Fools



# Fold a fruit purée into whipped cream for a carefree summer dessert

BY ABIGAIL JOHNSON DODGE

**T**he first time I tasted a fruit fool, I was wowed by its incredible texture—lush and silky-smooth, the mousse of my dreams. And when I realized how simple a fool is to make, I became even more of a fan—just purée fresh fruit, sweeten to your liking, gently fold the purée into whipped cream, and dessert is ready. You can layer a fool with chunks of fruit, parfait-style, in a wineglass, spoon it over shortcake and berries, or use it as a filling for a sponge cake roulade. Personally, I like my fools straight and simple—spooned into a pretty goblet, with a couple of crisp cookies on the side.

## USE ALL YOUR SENSES TO CHOOSE THE BEST FRUIT

Of course you want to choose the best-tasting, ripest fruit you can find for all fruit desserts, but it's especially important for a fool: because a fool has so few ingredients, the success of the dessert rests almost entirely on the fruit's flavor. Consider the season and availability of fruits. Fruit that's fool-worthy is so perfectly ripe that you'd want to eat it this minute. If you're not sure, it's better to err on the side of overripeness.

Take a close look and a good whiff, and ask for a taste. All fruit destined for a fool should be plump, unbruised, and fragrant, so don't just look at the fruit—pick it up and smell it, too. Berries should be fat, bright, and juicy, never moldy, crushed, or runny. Look for strawberries with good all-over color. Avoid strawberries with sizable areas of white; chances are they'll taste flat. To test the ripeness of peaches and mangos, press the shoulders gently; the fruit should give slightly. Be just as picky with fruit with a hefty price tag; high cost is no guarantee of full flavor.



*"Always ask for a taste," says Abby Dodge. "I've never been refused, and it's the only way to really check the flavor of fruit."*

*Fools are an old-fashioned English dessert. Some say their quirky name comes from the fact that you'd have to be a fool not to be able to make one.*

## Want to see this in action?

Check out our video on making fools on *Fine Cooking's* web site.  
<http://www.taunton.com/fc/>

## TASTE THE PURÉE AS YOU GO

Cooking with fruit is just like making a soup or a sauce—you need to taste as you go to make sure you're heading toward a good result.

**Additional flavorings punch up fruit flavors.** Fruit flavors get muted when you fold the purée into the whipped cream, so the purée should be pretty punchy to start with. If you find that the flavor needs a little pick-me-up, a pinch of salt, a squeeze of lemon, lime, or orange, or a generous pinch of zest

goes a long way toward intensifying it. With mangos especially, a touch of salt or even a smidgen of cayenne is great for brightening flavors. A teaspoon of fruit-based liqueur, such as Framboise, Triple Sec, or Grand Marnier, can add zip to fruit purées, too.

Although most traditional fool recipes call for simmering the fruit to concentrate the juices and dissolve the sugar, I don't always recommend it. Mango, for example, is one fruit that doesn't benefit from cooking: its color dulls, and to me, the flavor really falls flat.

To add texture to the Three-Berry Fool, I take a threefold approach. I like to simmer the blackberries to reduce their juices and strengthen the flavor and color, while I mash the strawberries and keep the raspberries whole, tossing both into the warm blackberry purée. Straining the seeds from the blackberries (which have bigger, harder seeds than the other two berries) gives you a more velvety fool.

After sweetening the fruit purée, you'll need to chill it before mixing with the cream. Since chilling tends to dull flavors, it's vital to taste the fruit once again, and to adjust the flavorings if you need to.

#### WHIP THE CREAM TO FIRM PEAKS

In a fool, the texture of the cream is as important as the flavor of the fruit, so, contrary to what you normally read in a recipe, in this case I recommend using ultrapasteurized heavy cream, which mounds better than pasteurized when it's whipped. (According to food scientist Shirley O. Corriher, this is probably because of ultra's extra pasteurizing stage, where the heat may help proteins coagulate and result in a firmer whipping cream.) It might sound strange to recommend something that's super-

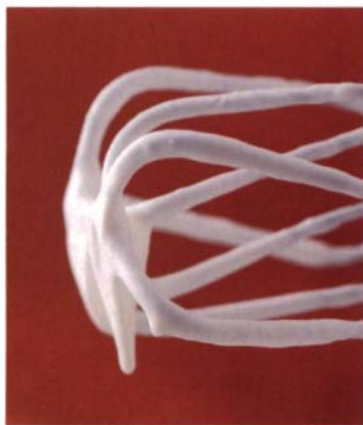


*The contrast between refreshing mango purée and rich whipped cream gives Mango-Mint Fool its wonderful flavor. The secret to making the flavors pop is a pinch of salt—and a pinch of cayenne.*

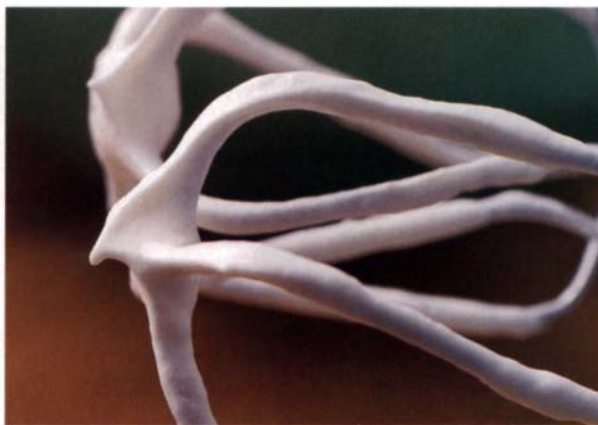
processed, but you'll get a more dollopy fool. I like to start with cold cream and a chilled bowl, which helps the cream to whip up into firm peaks, as you'll see in the photos below.

**Assembly is simple.** Both the fruit purée and the cream should be very cold so that you get a firm fool that spoons into luscious mounds. Folding gently with a wide rubber spatula is the gentlest, most efficient way to blend ingredients and maintain a sumptuous texture.

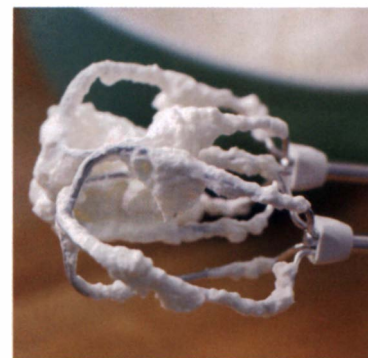
## Watch closely while whipping the cream—firm peaks happen fast



*Soft peaks flow off the beater. They have almost fluid tips that fall over themselves, and they'll give you a soft, puddly fool. It will taste fine, but the fool won't have that voluptuous quality you're after.*



*Firm peaks are what you want—and they happen just seconds after soft ones. Stop the mixer and slowly lift the beaters—the peaks should be well-defined, yet the top quarter of the tip will slouch and fall over. The beaters will leave deep, soft marks in the cream, and you'll get sumptuous mounds of fool.*



*Stiff peaks are next, and grainy is close behind. Peaks will stand upright, and the beaters will leave sharp marks in the cream. A few seconds past stiff comes grainy, which will give the fool a curdy texture. It will taste okay, but it won't look as good nor feel as luscious in your mouth.*

## Three-Berry Fool

If you don't want to use liqueur, substitute orange juice. *Serves four.*

*½ pint (1⅓ cups) blackberries*  
*½ cup sugar*  
*2 Tbs. Grand Marnier or other orange liqueur*  
*1 tsp. grated lemon zest*  
*½ cup raspberries*  
*6 large, plump strawberries, hulled, quartered, and smashed with a fork (to yield ½ cup pulp)*  
*1¼ cups cold ultrapasteurized heavy cream*

In a small saucepan, mix the blackberries, sugar, Grand Marnier, and lemon zest. Simmer over medium heat until the juices are released and the sugar is dissolved, stirring frequently, about 5 min. Strain, pressing with the back of a spoon to force the pulp through the strainer. Discard the seeds. Add the raspberries and the smashed strawberries to the hot mixture, pressing gently on the raspberries to crush them slightly. You'll have about 1⅓ cups of berry mixture. Chill until very cold, about 3 hours. Taste and add more sugar, liqueur, or zest if needed, remembering that the flavors will be muted when you fold the purée into the cream.

In a chilled bowl, whip the cream to firm but not stiff peaks (see photos at left). With a rubber spatula, gently fold 1 cup of the chilled berry mixture into the whipped cream just until incorporated. Serve immediately or refrigerate up to 24 hours. Just before serving, drizzle the remaining berry mixture over the fool.

## Mango-Mint Fool

Your knife will glide easily through the tender part of a mango but will make a grating sound when you get too close to the pit and the stringy flesh. *Serves four.*

*2 ripe medium mangos (about 14 oz. each), peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks*  
*⅓ cup sugar*  
*3 Tbs. fresh orange juice*  
*1 Tbs. finely chopped fresh mint*  
*Generous pinch of salt*  
*Tiny pinch of cayenne*  
*1 cup cold ultrapasteurized heavy cream*

In a food processor, process the mango chunks, sugar, orange juice, mint, salt, and cayenne until smooth, scraping down the sides of the bowl as needed, about 1½ min. You should have about 1½ cups mango purée. Taste and add more sugar or salt if needed, remembering that the flavors will be muted when you fold the purée into the cream. Chill until very cold, about 2 hours.

In a chilled bowl, whip the cream to firm but not stiff peaks (see photos at left). With a rubber spatula, gently fold 1 cup of the chilled purée into the whipped cream just until fully incorporated. Gently stir in the remaining purée to make swirls. Serve immediately or refrigerate up to 24 hours.

## Blueberry Fool

You can make the blueberry compote up to three days ahead. *Serves four.*

*4 cups blueberries, rinsed, picked over, and drained*  
*⅓ cup packed light brown sugar*

## More foolish ideas

Many fruits make great fools. Some of my favorites are:

- ◆ puréed peeled ripe peaches with a pinch of cinnamon.
- ◆ simmered rhubarb with brown sugar and rosemary.
- ◆ poached red currants in orange-spiked sugar syrup.

I also like to substitute some *crème fraîche* or mascarpone for a little of the heavy cream.

*3 Tbs. fresh lemon juice*

*Pinch of salt*

*Generous pinch of freshly grated nutmeg*

*1¼ cups cold ultrapasteurized heavy cream*

In a medium saucepan, combine the blueberries, brown sugar, lemon juice, salt, and nutmeg. Simmer over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until the berries have released their juice and burst when lightly pressed with the spoon, about 6 min. You'll have about 3 cups of berry mixture at this stage. Increase the heat to high and reduce the mixture by half, stirring frequently to prevent scorching, 6 or 7 min. Pour the compote into a bowl or a large measuring cup and refrigerate until very cold, about 4 hours. Taste and adjust the flavorings if you like, remembering that flavors will be muted when you fold the mixture into the cream.

In a chilled bowl, whip the cream to firm but not stiff peaks (see photos at left). With a rubber spatula, gently fold 1¼ cups of the chilled compote into the cream just until incorporated. Serve immediately or refrigerate up to 24 hours. Just before serving, spoon the remaining compote over the fool.

*Abby Dodge is Fine Cooking's recipe tester and the author of Great Fruit Desserts (Rizzoli, 1997). ◆*



*An intense blueberry compote that you can make ahead is the base for this Blueberry Fool.*



# How to Choose a Great Grill

Look for three key features—high heat, a large cooking area, and rock-solid construction

BY SARAH JAY

*The hotter the better.*

As a kid growing up in a coastal New England town, I thought a cookout meant a drive to the beach to snag one of those big square grills mounted on a post next to the picnic tables. Those open braziers with the movable cooking grates aren't necessarily a bad thing (in fact, I recall some lip-smacking good steaks from those days), but after checking out what's available in grills today, I'm now more likely to pick a more versatile grill and one that gives me more control over my cooking.

Over the last few years, the choices for home grillers have multiplied. Prices have risen significantly, too, as manufacturers try to market luxury models with features galore. A top-of-the-line outdoor cooker today might sport enough extras to turn your new grill into a virtual backyard kitchen.

That kind of feature-loaded grill can be an exciting way to broaden your cooking options, but keep in mind that all the extras in the world mean nothing without the right foundation: a good-quality grill that suits your cooking style.

## ASK YOURSELF HOW YOU PLAN TO USE IT

In summer, you can find a wide range of barbecue grills everywhere from discount department stores to high-end patio shops. And there are catalogs that feature grills year-round. Where you look depends on the kind of grill you want and the level of customer service you need. Before you start to shop, ask yourself some questions to help focus your search.

**How often do you expect to use the grill?** If you plan to cook out every weekend and even some week-

nights, your grill may become more like another kitchen appliance than a special-occasion tool. In that case, you'll probably appreciate a fast ignition system and easy cleanup, which are advantages of gas grills. If you think you'll be cooking out once or twice a month, you may want to go for a less costly but still sturdy grill, which is easier to find in charcoal models.

**How many people do you usually grill for?** For you and a friend, you can probably make do with a grill with a small cooking area, even a portable hibachi. But if you're cooking for a family or to entertain, you'll need a grill with a very large primary cooking area. (City dwellers with fire escapes or tiny balconies might have to limit their search to small models.)

**Does convenience matter?** If you feel comfortable lighting fires and don't mind cleaning up ashes, you could be a charcoal fan. But if you get impatient waiting 30 or so minutes for coals to get hot, consider gas.

**What's your style of grilling?** Those who stick to typical barbecue fare—burgers, ribs, chicken wings—can certainly survive with a basic, no-frills model. Cooks who like to experiment might want to consider the more versatile styles, perhaps a grill that doubles as a smoker or one with a rotisserie. If you grill bulky items like whole turkeys or roasts, be sure that the grill has a tall lid and that any extra racks (like those used to keep bread warm) can be removed.

**What's your budget?** Grills range from just a few dollars for disposable supermarket hibachis to many thousands for a stainless-steel construction that will stand like a trophy in your backyard. Charcoal grills are more affordable, but they can run to several hundred dollars or more. Gas grills start at around \$100, but you may have to spend much more than that to find one that approaches a respectable value.

## YOU FOUND THE GRILL YOU WANT —NOW, DOES IT MEASURE UP?

In interviews with more than a dozen professional grillers, I kept hearing the same three things: make sure the grill can get really hot, that it has a very large cooking area, and that it's well built. As you shop, keep these ideas in mind.

The grill should be able to deliver searing heat and maintain it even after the food is added. Intense heat quickly sears the surface of the food, browning it and creating that



*Is limited space an issue? Grills come in a range of sizes.*

slightly sweet crust. While some grilling methods do use more moderate heat, you need the option of fast searing.

Charcoal and hardwood burn hotter than gas, and their coals can be spread out, which means you can maintain a more even bed of high temperature along the entire grilling area. Getting high heat from a charcoal grill is usually just a matter of adding enough fuel. Natural hardwood briquettes and lump charcoal burn hotter than some less expensive briquettes, and they don't have chemical additives.

The design of gas grills makes maintaining high and even heat more problematic. The gas jets lie below the grill surface. They may be straight bars or oblong shapes, but no matter how they're positioned, some cooking areas will always be directly above the heat and others a few inches away. Heat-spreading elements like lava rocks can help disperse the heat, but some areas will still be hotter than others.

Compare the heat potential of various gas grills by checking total Btu (British thermal units), which

**"A 27-inch Weber kettle is the best thing that's ever been invented. Period."**

—A. Cort Sinnes,  
author of  
*The Grilling Encyclopedia*



*Plenty of space to grill.*



*Tough enough to last.*

“I like simple, heavy-duty grills. I don’t understand these bells and whistles, and I don’t think the people who design them do, either.”

—Chris Schlesinger, co-author of *The Thrill of the Grill*

range from 22,000 to 72,000. Because of all the variables involved (small grills have fewer total Btu than large grills, but more Btu per burner), it may be simpler to just use the “hand test.” If you can hold your hand two inches above the grate for only one or two seconds, you have high heat. Ask the salesperson to hook up the grill to a gas tank before you buy. (You may have to head to a high-end patio shop to find a salesperson willing to accommodate this request.)

**The corollary to heat intensity is heat control.** Neither gas nor charcoal offer a perfect way to control or even measure the heat, so experience will be your best guide. Some grills offer temperature gauges, but since they only measure the temperature of the air, they’re not an accurate indicator of the heat that’s actually reaching the food.

With charcoal grills, your options for heat control are top and bottom air vents, adjustable cooking grates, and adjustable fireboxes (the containers that hold the fuel). Gas grills have a simpler mechanism: one or more knobs that can be turned to low, medium, or high. That’s easy enough to do, but you’re still not completely in control of the heat reaching the food.

**Choose a grill with as vast a cooking surface as possible.** A large surface area means more flexibility and control. Imagine that you’re searing salmon steaks and vegetable kebabs for dinner. Your nose begins to sense a faintly bitter smell, warning you that the outside of the food is about to burn. If you

have a small grill and there’s no free cooking space left, you’re out of luck. But with a larger grill space, you can move the food to an area of lower heat, or indirect heat, to slow down the cooking.

As you compare surface areas among grills, be sure to calculate the primary cooking area, which receives direct heat, not the total cooking area, which can include extra warming racks that are higher than the actual grill surface. Most rectangular grills have primary cooking areas between 225 to 450 square inches. Round, kettle-style charcoal grills usually have 13- to 27-inch diameters, or 132 to 572 square inches of cooking space.

The cooking grate’s rods should be wide and heavy so that more surface area can touch and sear the food. The weight of the material is also important. Scott Rambo, a manager at Barbeques Galore, a chain of upscale grill stores, says he prefers porcelain-coated cast iron for strength and durability. After that, he’d choose stainless steel, raw cast iron, porcelain-coated steel, and, finally, chrome-plated steel.

**The grill should look and feel like it’s built for durability.** Donna Myers, editor of the *BackYard BarbeQuer* newsletter and spokesperson for the Barbecue Industry Association, recommends using the “tire test” to check the quality of the grill’s construction. “Kick it, lift it, move it,” she says. Does it hold together? Does the lid close snugly? Are the handles positioned wisely (so you can open the lid without burning yourself)? Are the wheels sturdy and wide? Do the vents seem like they’ll take abuse? Does the cart wobble?

“Go rattle the demo in the store,” says Melanie Barnard, who wrote *The Best Covered Grills & Kettle Grills Cookbook Ever*. “It’s got to be as solid as a rock; otherwise, you know that your dog, the wind, or your kid is going to knock it over.”

Note the materials used for each part. A base of porcelain-covered steel, cast aluminum, or stainless steel will last.

On a gas grill, the quality of the burners is an issue. All should feel heavy. Scott Rambo thinks the best burners are made of cast brass, followed by cast iron, stainless steel, and aluminum. The shape of the burners matters, too, with oval and H-shaped burners at the low end, and parallel bars or long S-shaped burners at the upper end. Remember that more

burners mean better temperature control, which means better grilling.

Above the burners are heat dispersers. These are often lava rocks or ceramic briquettes, which help spread the heat and shield the burners from dripping grease. Lava rock is a light, porous material that traps grease and will probably need replacing sooner than solid ceramic briquettes. Another option is the V-shaped metal runner system (Weber calls them “flavorizer bars”) that collects and directs grease, minimizing flare-ups while vaporizing juices for flavor.

For any grill, consider the manufacturer. Besides checking the specifics of warranties, you want to be confident that the company will exist a few years down the road when you need that replacement part.

### EXTRA FEATURES CAN BE USEFUL, BUT THEY DON'T MAKE THE GRILL

There's nothing wrong with a bell and a whistle, but don't get so enamored of gadgets that you forget



Not the “plain vanilla” type? Check out the latest features.

what's really important. Here are some of the features that may be included in the grill, or else offered as supplements.

**Rotisserie.** If you've been rigging up your own rotisseries until now, this might be something to consider. Powered by electricity, these add-ons are available for gas and some charcoal grills.

**Side burners.** An expensive convenience on gas grills, side burners can keep you from having to run into the house to melt butter for lobster, boil water for pasta, or warm up a pot of chili. But they can be vulnerable to gusts of wind.

**Smoker boxes or drawers.** As the interest in smoking foods picks up, smoker drawers and boxes are becoming standard accessories on gas grills. They hold soaked wood chips (or other flavor enhancers, such as fresh herbs). You can throw the chips directly onto charcoal briquettes, but they'll clog the burner ports of a gas grill, so a smoker box is mandatory if you want to do this sort of outdoor cooking with gas. They usually cost less than \$20.

**Glass windows.** These are a weak spot in the lid and they turn black very quickly. Pass.

**Ash catcher.** A feature on charcoal grills, this is a deep, mug-shaped cylinder that hangs below the coals, holds ashes, and can be removed for emptying and cleaning.

**Hinged, lift-up grates.** This smart feature allows you to add more charcoal during cooking without removing the entire grate.

**Condiment holders, utensil hooks, towel racks.** All are useful, but they don't add much value to the grill, and you can improvise your own.

**Cover.** A waterproof vinyl cover is definitely a wise investment, and probably the most important thing you can do to extend the life of your grill.

Sarah Jay is an associate editor for *Fine Cooking*. ♦

“Two of the best grills out there are your Weber and your Kingsford. Your Kingsford is easy to cook on. I like the capacity and the way it's set up.”

—Paul Kirk,  
author of *Paul Kirk's Championship Barbecue Sauces*

## Charcoal grills

### Call for catalogs.

#### Big Green Egg

800/939-3447  
www.BigGreenEgg.com  
\$99 to \$450

#### Hasty-Bake

800/426-6836  
www.webczar.com/hastybake  
\$329 to \$2,199

#### Kingsford

800/585-4745  
\$129 to \$200

#### Klose BBQ Pits

800/487-7487  
www.bbqpits.com  
\$69 and up  
Oklahoma Joe's  
800/227-5637  
www.oklahomajoes.com  
\$159 and up  
Weber  
800/446-1071; 847/705-8660  
www.weberbbq.com  
\$34 to \$849

## Gas grills

### Call for catalogs.

#### Charbroil/Coleman

800/352-4111  
\$169 to \$695

#### Ducane

800/382-2637  
www.ducane.com  
\$180 to \$2,200

#### Fiesta

800/396-3838  
\$119 to \$339

#### The Holland Grill

800/880-9766  
www.hollandgrill.com  
\$499 to \$2,795

#### Napoleon Appliance

705/726-4278  
www.napoleon.on.ca  
\$400 to \$1,900

#### Weber

800/446-1071; 847/705-8660  
www.weberbbq.com  
\$439 to \$8,000

# Cool Noodle Salads for



*"I adore the noodles known as bun in Vietnam," says author Mai Pham. "My husband and I eat them at least once a week."*



*Be sure to buy rice vermicelli noodles (bun), not mung bean vermicelli (also called bean threads). Thap Chua and Pagoda are two of the author's favorite brands.*



*A cool noodle salad topped with stir-fried vegetables makes a light, refreshing meal. You can cook and cool the noodles ahead of time.*

# Warm Summer Nights

Rice noodles, greens, and herbs make a cool bed for sizzling stir-fried toppings of shrimp, pork, or vegetables

BY MAI PHAM

I love noodles—all kinds. But if I had to pick the most endearing noodle, both to my soul and to my palate, it would have to be *bun*, Vietnamese vermicelli-style noodles. Made from rice flour, water, and salt, these noodles are a beloved staple in my native country. My favorite way to eat them is in what I call a cool noodle salad, a traditional Vietnamese dish (also called *bun*) of noodles served at room temperature with cool garnishes and warm toppings.

Here in the United States, cool noodle salads translate into perfect summer suppers. The soft rice noodles sit on a bed of cool, crunchy bean sprouts, cucumbers, lettuce, and mint, and they're topped with warm stir-fried vegetables, meat, or shrimp.

Drizzled with a lively sauce, *bun* becomes an intricately flavored dish of contrasting tastes, textures, and temperatures. I adore *bun*, not only because it exemplifies the freshness and liveliness of Vietnamese cuisine, but also because it makes a satisfying yet healthy meal—something we can all appreciate. The noodles and greens are always served in copious amounts, while the meat is served in smaller, garnish-size portions.

As kids, my sister and I loved these noodle dishes so much that we'd eat them two or three times a week. Walking home from school in Saigon, we would often stop at Chi Ba's popular sidewalk *bun* stand. Her tiny makeshift restaurant included a squeaky bench that held six customers at most, and a front counter cluttered with baskets of *con bun* (freshly made noodle "nests") and baskets of shredded greens and fragrant herbs. After squeezing onto the crowded bench, we'd order our usual: *bun* with

grilled pork and beef. Then we'd grab our chopsticks and wait eagerly.

Working with a deft hand, Chi Ba quickly threw juicy slices of pork and beef onto the hot grill, which sizzled, popped, and caramelized so furiously that a fragrant haze blurred our faces and whetted our appetites even more. She assembled our bowls, starting with handfuls of bean sprouts, shredded lettuce, and herbs, and adding fresh noodles and the delicious grilled meat. We'd drizzle on some *nuoc cham* (a Vietnamese dipping sauce), toss in some chopped roasted peanuts, and turn over the noodles a few times with our chopsticks. Once again, we'd find ourselves in *bun* heaven.

To make *bun* at home, start with the right noodles; they have everything to do with the character of the finished dish. *Bun* noodles are softer and less dense than pasta and other wheat-based noodles, so they easily absorb the juices they're bathed in. In the company of meats, spices, and herbs, *bun* noodles enhance them all, helping flavors to harmonize with one another.

Although fresh rice vermicelli is not widely available in this country, the dried noodles are easy to find at supermarkets and Asian grocery stores. Also called rice sticks, they are as thin as angel hair pasta, but more wiry, and are usually sold in one-pound



Perfectly cooked rice vermicelli noodles are soft and white but still resilient.

Rinse the cooked noodles in a colander just until they're cool and then drain well.



A splash of soy sauce into a sizzling hot pan quickly reduces and caramelizes, bringing a finishing touch to a topping of stir-fried vegetables.



**Highly fragrant herbs like spearmint, Thai basil, and red perilla** (clockwise from top) are author Mai Pham's favorites for noodle salads.

clear cellophane packages. Don't confuse rice vermicelli with mung bean vermicelli (also called bean threads), which cook up with a more toothsome texture than rice noodles. Rice vermicelli are quick to prepare, because they don't need to be soaked, and only need four to five minutes of cooking.

**Choose the freshest and crispest lettuce and herbs for the salad.** Slice the greens gently, rather than chopping them, so that they don't bruise and lose their juices. In Vietnam, we use a number of different highly fragrant herbs such as sharp, spicy Vietnamese coriander, anise-like red perilla, and another herb that's similar to lemon balm. Here, you can find these herbs in Asian markets, and sometimes at farmers' markets; however, mint, cilantro, basil, and Thai basil all work well. (Thai basil plants are now available in many garden centers, if you want to have a regular supply of this anise-scented herb.) In addition to the lettuce and herbs, you can also add either shredded carrot or daikon radish for color and crunch.

**In Vietnam, beef is a traditional topping for bun, but I like to use pork, shrimp, and vegetables as well.** My favorite toppings include a delicious caramel-marinated pork, lemongrass-scented shrimp, and a combination of stir-fried vegetables and tofu (or you could substitute chicken). With the master recipe for noodle salad, opposite, you can create different tasting *bun* meals just by changing the toppings, the greens, or even the herbs.



**Drizzle spicy nuoc cham** (a Vietnamese sauce) onto the lemongrass-shrimp topping and toss the whole salad to distribute the flavors.

**You can prepare all the components of bun (except the warm toppings) in advance.** *Nuoc cham*, a Vietnamese dipping sauce, keeps in the refrigerator for a month; with a jar handy, you can make *bun* anytime. Once you cook, cool, and drain the noodles, they'll keep at room temperature for several hours or until you're ready to serve. You can also wash and arrange your lettuce and herbs ahead of time. Keep them in the refrigerator covered with plenty of damp paper towels, and they'll stay crisp. Just be sure to remove the greens a half hour or so before serving. They should be cool, not cold.

Now all you have to do is pick your favorite topping for *bun*; they're all quick-cooking. Once you've tried the recipes I've provided, experiment with

## With the master recipe for noodle salad, you can create different tasting meals just by changing the toppings.

different toppings, garnishes, and herbs. As you'll soon discover, the possibilities for creating delicious juxtapositions of flavors and textures are endless. Maybe you'll adore *bun* as much as I do.

### Master Recipe for Cool Noodle Salads

If you like, prepare the greens and garnishes in advance and refrigerate. Cook the noodles up to two hours ahead and keep at room temperature. At serving time, you'll just have to prepare the toppings. *Serves four.*

#### FOR THE GREENS:

2 cups washed and shredded romaine, red, or green leaf lettuce  
2 cups fresh, crisp bean sprouts  
1½ cups peeled, seeded, and julienned cucumber  
⅓ to ½ cup roughly chopped or small whole mint leaves  
⅓ to ½ cup roughly chopped or small basil or Thai basil leaves

#### FOR THE GARNISHES:

2 Tbs. chopped roasted peanuts  
Nuoc cham (Vietnamese dipping sauce) (see recipe at right)  
12 sprigs cilantro

#### FOR THE NOODLES:

8 oz. dried rice vermicelli

#### FOR THE TOPPING:

1 recipe Warm Lemongrass Shrimp, Vietnamese Grilled Pork, or Stir-Fried Vegetables (beginning at right)

**For the greens and herbs**—Divide the lettuce, bean sprouts, cucumber, mint, and basil among four large soup or pasta bowls. If working ahead of time, cover each bowl with damp paper towels and refrigerate.

**For the garnishes**—Set peanuts aside. Make 1 recipe *nuoc cham* and refrigerate.

**For the noodles**—Bring a medium potful of water to a rolling boil. Add the rice vermicelli and, stirring often, cook them until the strands are soft and white, but still resilient, 3 to 5 min. Don't be tempted to undercook them, as they must be fully cooked to absorb the flavors of the dish. Rinse them in a colander under cold water just until they are cool and the water runs clear. Let the

noodles drain in the colander for 30 min., and then set them aside for up to 2 hours, unrefrigerated.

**For the topping**—Follow the directions for one of the recipes starting below. These toppings can be served hot or slightly cooled.

**To assemble the salads**—Remove the salad bowls from the refrigerator 20 to 30 min. before serving. The greens and bowl should be cool, not cold. Fluff the noodles with your fingers and divide them among the prepared salad bowls. Put the cooked topping on the noodles and garnish each bowl with the peanuts and cilantro. Pass the *nuoc cham* at the table; each diner should drizzle about 3 Tbs. over the salad and then toss the salad in the bowl a few times with two forks or chopsticks before eating.

### Nuoc Cham (Vietnamese Dipping Sauce)

Keep a jar of this sauce in the refrigerator; it will last for a month. You can find ground chile paste (my favorite is Rooster brand) and fish sauce at many supermarkets but always at Asian groceries. *Yields 1½ cups.*

1 clove garlic  
2 to 3 Thai bird chiles (or 1 small jalapeño or serrano chile), cored, seeded, and minced; more or less to taste  
½ tsp. ground chile paste; more or less to taste  
⅔ cup hot water  
¼ cup sugar  
¼ cup fish sauce  
2 Tbs. fresh lime juice  
2 Tbs. shredded carrots (optional)

In a mortar and pestle, pound the garlic and fresh chiles to a paste. (Or mince them together with a knife.) In a small bowl, combine this garlic and chile mixture with the chile paste, hot water, and sugar. Stir well. Add the fish sauce and lime juice and combine. Float the carrots on top. Let sit for at least 15 min. before using.

### Warm Lemongrass Shrimp

Once the ingredients are prepared, this delicious topping takes just minutes to cook. *Serves four as a topping for bun.*

2 Tbs. vegetable oil  
2 shallots, thinly sliced  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1 lb. large shrimp, peeled and deveined  
1 Tbs. minced fresh lemongrass  
2 cups sliced white mushrooms  
2 tsp. fish sauce  
1 tsp. sugar  
Salt to taste

In a large skillet, heat the oil over high heat. Add the shallots and garlic, quickly stirring until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the shrimp and lemongrass; stir-fry for



Garlic, chiles, lime juice, and fish sauce make a lively dressing for the salads. Finely chop the garlic and chiles, or grind them in a mortar and pestle.

### FISH SAUCE GIVES A SWEET-SALTY ACCENT

Nuoc mam, or fish sauce, is a staple seasoning ingredient in Vietnamese and other Asian cooking. It's used for salting foods and for rounding out the flavors of sauces, soups, and noodle dishes. Fish sauce (also called *nam pla* in Thai) is sold at Asian markets and some supermarkets. Author Mai Pham prefers the Viet Huong and Phu Quoc brands because of their good balance of sweet and salty flavors.

about 2 min. Add the mushrooms and sprinkle with the fish sauce, sugar, and a little salt. Stir-fry until the shrimp is cooked and the mushrooms are wilted, another 2 to 3 min. Remove from the heat and serve warm on *bun*.

### Vietnamese Grilled Pork

A caramel sauce is the secret to this flavorful pork. Serves four as a topping for *bun*.

#### FOR THE CARAMEL:

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup water



#### Make a caramel sauce to marinate

pork. When the caramel is a deep brown, carefully add hot water to thin the sauce.

#### FOR THE PORK:

2 large shallots, sliced, or  
5 scallions (white parts only),  
chopped

2 tsp. fish sauce

2 tsp. soy sauce

Pinch salt

2 Tbs. vegetable oil

1½ lb. pork loin or sirloin, sliced  
into large pieces about  
¼-inch thick

**To make the caramel**—Combine the sugar and water in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Stir a few times and allow to simmer until the sauce turns deep brown, about 15 min. Meanwhile, have some extra hot water ready on a back burner. Once the sauce reaches the desired color, carefully

add 4 to 5 Tbs. hot water to slow the cooking and thin the sauce. (Be sure to hold the pan away from you so that none of the hot caramel splatters on you when you add the water.) If necessary, add more hot water. The sauce should only be thick enough to coat the back of a spoon. Set aside to cool.

**To make the pork**—Pound the shallots in a mortar and pestle or mince by hand. Transfer the shallots to a mixing bowl and combine with the fish sauce, soy sauce, salt, vegetable oil, and cooled caramel sauce. Stir well to blend. Add the pork slices and let marinate for 20 min. Meanwhile, heat a broiler or light a charcoal or gas grill. When the broiler or fire is very hot, cook the pork until just done, about 2 min. on each side. Let the pork rest for 10 to 15 min., cut into thin strips, and serve on *bun*.

### Stir-Fried Vegetables

You can try this topping with more unusual vegetables, like Chinese long beans or jicama. I like the crisp tofu in this recipe, but you could also substitute sliced, cooked chicken. Serves four as a topping for *bun*.

#### FOR THE TOFU:

2 Tbs. vegetable oil

8 oz. firm tofu, drained and cut into rectangular strips  
about 1-inch wide

#### FOR THE VEGETABLES:

2 Tbs. vegetable oil

2 shallots, thinly sliced

6 dried black mushrooms, soaked in hot water for 30 min.,  
drained, stemmed, and thinly sliced

2 cups broccoli florets (cut through their stems into thin  
slices), blanched in boiling water and drained

1½ cups shredded green or Napa cabbage

1½ cups thinly sliced bok choy



Think of the meat as a garnish. Just a small portion of grilled caramel pork gives a smoky-sweet flavor to a whole bowl of noodles and greens.



*2 Tbs. soy sauce; more or less to taste  
½ red bell pepper, thinly sliced*

**To cook the tofu**—Heat the oil in a nonstick pan or skillet over medium heat. Add the tofu pieces and stir-fry until nicely browned. Remove and drain on paper towels. When cool, cut them into bite-size strips. Set aside.

**To cook the vegetables**—Heat the oil in a large skillet or sauté pan over high heat. If the pan is smaller than 12 inches, cook the vegetables in two batches. Wait until the oil gets very hot, almost smoking (the vegetables should sizzle during the entire cooking time), and add the shallots, constantly stirring until they become fragrant, about 20 seconds. Add the mushrooms and stir-fry for another 20 seconds. Add the broccoli, cabbage, and bok choy, stir for 30 seconds, and add the red bell pepper. (If the pan gets too dry, sprinkle in 1 to 2 Tbs. water.)

Working quickly, create an open space in the middle of the pan by pushing the vegetables against the edges. Add the soy sauce to the open area. It should sizzle and caramelize slightly, creating a distinctive aroma. Stir the vegetables with the soy sauce a few times and remove from the heat.

Toss the vegetables with the tofu and top the *bun*.

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*Mai Pham is the chef-owner of Lemon Grass Restaurant and Cafés in Sacramento, California. She is the author of The Best of Vietnamese & Thai Cooking (Prima, 1996). ♦*



## Drink Choices

**Choose light-bodied wines or beers with a hint of sweetness**

These Asian noodle salads are exotic, refreshing, and tasty, but watch out, wine lovers: “Asian” and “salads” spell potential wine trouble. With salads, the usual culprit is vinegar in the dressing, because vinegar’s acetic acid doesn’t mate well with wine’s fruit acids. No problem on that score here, though, because the tang in the *nuoc cham* dressing comes from lime juice. “Asian,” on the other hand, suggests flavors that really can clash with wine. Salt (from soy and fish sauces), sweetness (from sugar), and hot spice all do damage to dry wine.

So if you want wine, look for one that either has a touch of sweetness or seems to because it’s very fruity. For summer, a chilled rosé makes a fine choice. Give your guests a chuckle with Toad Hollow’s dry “Eye of the Toad,” or try a slightly sweeter rosé, such as Heitz’s Grignolino Rosé, or

Zinfandel Rosé from Pendroncelli.

You could also play it a bit more offbeat with cider: the sweet-tart Hard Core from Massachusetts, Sonoma’s Rhyne Cider, or the pear, apple, and honey varieties from Ace would all work well.

But if you’d rather tame the spice, pour a frosty brew. Light, smooth beers and ales, such as Pyramid Pale Ale from Washington and Whitewater Wheat from Great Divide in Denver, do a fine job. To my taste, though, a touch more sweetness in the glass works some real magic. I love Nor’wester Honey Weizen from Oregon, Brewery Hill Honey Amber Ale from Pennsylvania, and the mellow Grant’s Apple Honey Ale from Washington.

*Rosina Tinari Wilson teaches and writes about food and wine pairing in San Francisco’s Bay Area.*

MASTER CLASS

# Lobster Napoleon

Prepare the simple elements ahead and build a dazzling appetizer just like a restaurant pro

BY CHARLIE TROTTER



If you want a knock-'em-dead starter for a small dinner party, here it is—a lobster, avocado, and papaya napoleon, just the type of dish I like to serve at my restaurant, Charlie Trotter's. A napoleon is not only gorgeous, but it also offers contrasting flavor and texture in every layer, and in every bite.

There's a bit of handiwork and patience involved in constructing a napoleon, especially at the restaurant where we turn out many each night. But as you'll see, this version consists of simple elements—delicate potato wafers called tuiles; smooth, mashed avocado; succulent boiled lobster; tangy pickled papaya—that you can prepare in advance and assemble when you're ready to serve. Just take it step by

*It's easier  
than you think.*

*This Lobster Napoleon  
is a step-by-step assembly of  
simple components made ahead.*



## Two days ahead, make the basil oil

*Blanch the basil and parsley in boiling salted water for 20 seconds, and then shock them in ice water. Squeeze the herbs dry in a dishtowel, and then chop them coarsely. Purée the herbs and oils in a blender until the mixture is uniform and bright green, 3 to 4 minutes. Transfer to a bowl, cover, and refrigerate overnight.*



*Strain the oil through a fine sieve, discarding the solids. Refrigerate overnight. The next day, decant and discard the sediment. The oil will keep in the refrigerator for up to a month.*

## Pickle the papaya



*In a small, nonreactive saucepan, simmer everything but the papaya for 2 minutes. Cool the pickling juice; strain into a nonreactive bowl over the papaya. Let the mixture sit, covered in the refrigerator, for at least 1 hour but no longer than overnight. Strain before using the papaya.*

## Mix the shallot vinaigrette



*In a small bowl, mix the lemon juice, rice vinegar, parsley, salt, and pepper. Slowly whisk in the roasting oil. Mince the roasted shallots and add them to the bowl.*

step and you'll get delicious, beautiful results that will really wow your guests.

### **TILES PROVIDE THE FRAMEWORK**

Tuile is French for "tile." You may have seen cookie-like tuiles (pronounced TWEEL) as an accompaniment for sorbets, but I like to make them with a potato batter and use them as a framework for a napoleon. The tuiles support the other ingredients, as well as adding their own crisp texture.

#### **Make a template from a plastic lid.**

Tuiles need to be paper-thin and consistent in shape, so you'll need to use a template. As you'll see in the photo on p. 66, I like to cut out the center of a plastic yogurt, sour cream, or ice cream lid (you probably have one around the house).

You can even make tuiles freehand to get varied freeform shapes, but with a template, you'll get more precise rounds. An offset spatula for spreading the batter keeps your knuckles clear of the work surface. If you don't have one, experiment with a small, very flexible rubber spatula.

#### **Spread the batter when it's warm.**

This potato batter doesn't spread evenly when it's chilled. Rice the potato while it's still warm and mix the batter right after. The batter will keep for up to two days in the refrigerator, but if you make it ahead, let it sit out for a while before using, or warm it gently over a water bath for easier spreading.

**Bake the tuiles on a solid, nonstick surface.** For such a thin, quick-cooking wafer, insulated baking sheets, with their

cushion of air, don't work very well. At the restaurant, we use a nonstick silicone liner, which you can find at a good cooking supply store. If you don't have a silicone liner, lightly oil a solid baking sheet, or use nonstick sheets; again, just make sure they're solid. Because the tuiles are paper-thin, it's important to check on them often and to rotate the pans during

## To make the tuiles, mix a potato batter and spread it thin



*While the peeled potato is warm, pass it through a ricer (a warm potato makes the batter easier to spread). Whip the potato with the butter on medium until smooth, about 1 minute. Mix in the egg whites until incorporated, about 3 minutes. Add the salt, pepper, and herbs.*



*Make a template by cutting a 2½-inch round from a plastic yogurt or sour cream lid, slitting an X in the middle so you can cut out the center easily. Leave a ¼-inch border and cut a small tab handle. Heat the oven to 350°F.*



*On nonstick sheet pans or regular pans with a nonstick liner, drop a generous teaspoonful of batter in the center of the template. With an offset spatula, spread a very thin layer of batter into the center of the template. Repeat until you have at least 16. It's a good idea to bake extra in case of burning or breakage (and to nibble on).*

baking to ensure even cooking. At the restaurant, we bake the tuiles in a convection oven, which helps them lie flat and brown evenly, but a regular oven works, too; the tuiles just won't be quite as flat.

You can make the tuiles a day ahead and store them in an airtight container. If they lose their crispness, you can crisp them on a baking sheet in a 300°F oven for just a few minutes.

### TYING THE LOBSTER'S TAIL KEEPS IT STRAIGHT

It's crucial that the lobster be alive just before cooking or the meat will be mealy.

You'll use meat from both the tail and the claw. The tail meat will be easier to slice into neat medallions if you tie a soup spoon or a table knife to the tail to keep it straight before cooking the lobster. The tail cooks faster than the claw, which has a thicker shell, so I recommend erring on the side of undercooking—you can always quickly sauté the meat that's not as cooked as you'd like. When the lobster is done, it's important to shock it in ice water immediately to

prevent it from overcooking, but don't let it sit in the cold water; this will dilute the wonderful flavors.

Cooking and shelling the lobster one day ahead is okay, but to keep the meat good and moist, wait to slice it until just before you assemble the napoleon. Lobster meat tends to dry out after it's sliced.

### OTHER ELEMENTS GIVE FLAVOR, TEXTURE, AND COLOR CONTRASTS

Paying close attention to a few other details will go a long way toward making this dish look great and taste terrific.

**Pulped avocado is the "glue" that secures the layers.** Make it as close to serving time as possible because avocado turns brown fast. Some cooks think that leaving the pit in mashed avocado discourages browning. I wish it were that easy. Lemon or lime juice will help avocado keep its bright color, though, as will covering it tightly with plastic wrap to reduce the contact with air.

**Pickled papaya gives a hot and sour flavor.** I love the tangy counterpoint that pickled fruit provides. I've given it a short

## Pulp the avocado



*In a small bowl, mash the avocado, shallots, and lime juice together with a fork until almost smooth. Fold in the cilantro; season with salt and pepper.*

pickling time so the fruit flavors aren't overwhelmed.

**Basil oil is a striking, fragrant accent.** If you decide to make your own, you'll need to start the oil at least two days before you serve the napoleon to give the basil flavor time to fully develop (you can even make the oil up to a month in advance, as long as you refrigerate it). I find



*Bake the tuiles until golden brown, 8 to 10 minutes, rotating the pan at least once. Start checking after 5 minutes, removing browned tuiles individually as soon as they're done. Cool on a rack. Store in an airtight container at room temperature.*

that making my own infused oil gives more intense flavor, but if you have to rely on store-bought, try Consorzio, which you can find in many supermarkets.

#### **AN ASSEMBLY LINE SPEEDS SETUP**

When all the components are prepared and you've selected your plates, you're ready to begin assembling. If you're making this dish for a dinner party, corral a few guests to pitch in, assembly-line style.

**Line up all the components.** Arrange everything in small containers in the order you'll use them: avocado, tuiles, greens, lobster, papaya, vinaigrette, basil oil. You'll want to work swiftly—the moist avocado and lobster will turn the crispy tuiles soggy if they're left sitting. Make sure that each ingredient is set firmly on the previous layer, or you'll end up with a Leaning Tower of Pisa that will tumble on its way to the table. When your assembly is complete, serve the napoleons immediately.

After this appetizer, serve a simple main course, such as a grilled tenderloin of beef or seared tuna.

*(Continued)*

## **Cook the lobster and extract the meat**



*Tie a spoon or blunt table knife to the lobster tails to keep the tail straight during cooking (a straight tail is easier to slice). Plunge the lobsters into a large pot of boiling salted water. Boil until just cooked, 9 to 10 minutes, shock in ice water, and drain.*



*Extract the lobster meat. Snap off the claws and extract the claw meat. Twist apart the tail and head; discard the head. With scissors, cut along the center of the tail's underside and then pull the sides away from each other. Extract the tail meat, removing the dark vein if necessary. Set the meat aside unsliced. Just before you assemble the napoleon, slice the meat and toss it with 3 tablespoons of the shallot vinaigrette.*

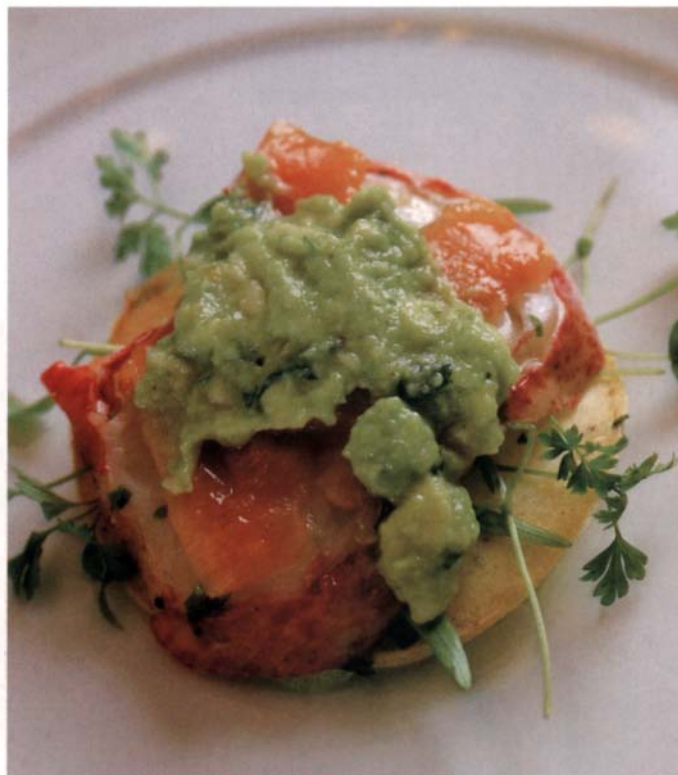
## To assemble, line up the components on deck



*Put 1 teaspoon pulped avocado in the center of each plate. Center a tuile on top of the pulped avocado, pressing down lightly to secure.*



*Arrange a few greens on the tuile, and lay a few lobster pieces on top of the greens. On top of the lobster, set a few pieces of pickled papaya.*



*Top with a teaspoon of pulped avocado and center a tuile on top, pressing lightly to secure. Repeat the layering until you have three layers of lobster and a tuile on top to finish.*

### Lobster Napoleon with Herbed Potato Tuiles

Smoked salmon is a delicious substitute if you're not in the mood for lobster. Yields four appetizer-size napoleons.

#### FOR THE BASIL OIL:

3 cups loosely packed fresh basil leaves  
1 cup loosely packed fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves  
1 cup very fresh canola or grapeseed oil  
¼ cup olive oil

#### FOR THE PAPAYA:

½ cup water  
¼ cup rice vinegar  
3 Tbs. sugar  
1 Tbs. kosher salt  
1 whole clove  
1 tsp. mustard seeds  
1 tsp. black peppercorns  
1 tsp. chopped fresh ginger  
½ jalapeño, cored, seeded, and chopped  
½ ripe papaya, peeled, seeded, and thinly sliced crosswise (about ½ cup)

#### FOR THE SHALLOT VINAIGRETTE:

2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice  
1 Tbs. rice vinegar  
2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley or chervil  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 shallots, peeled and roasted in ½ cup olive oil at 350°F until soft (20 to 30 minutes)

#### FOR THE TUILES:

1 medium (10 oz.) Idaho potato, baked at 400°F for 1 hour and peeled when still warm  
2 Tbs. butter  
4 egg whites  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper  
¼ cup (combined) finely chopped fresh basil and flat-leaf parsley

#### FOR THE AVOCADO:

1 ripe avocado  
1 Tbs. chopped shallots  
1 Tbs. fresh lime juice  
1 Tbs. chopped fresh cilantro  
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

#### FOR THE LOBSTER:

2 live lobsters (1½ lb. each)

#### FOR THE GREENS:

1 cup mixed tiny fresh herbs or mixed baby greens (or larger herbs, snipped)

Follow the preparation instructions in the recipe list and then follow the photos and captions starting on p. 65.

Charlie Trotter is the chef-owner of Charlie Trotter's in Chicago. ♦

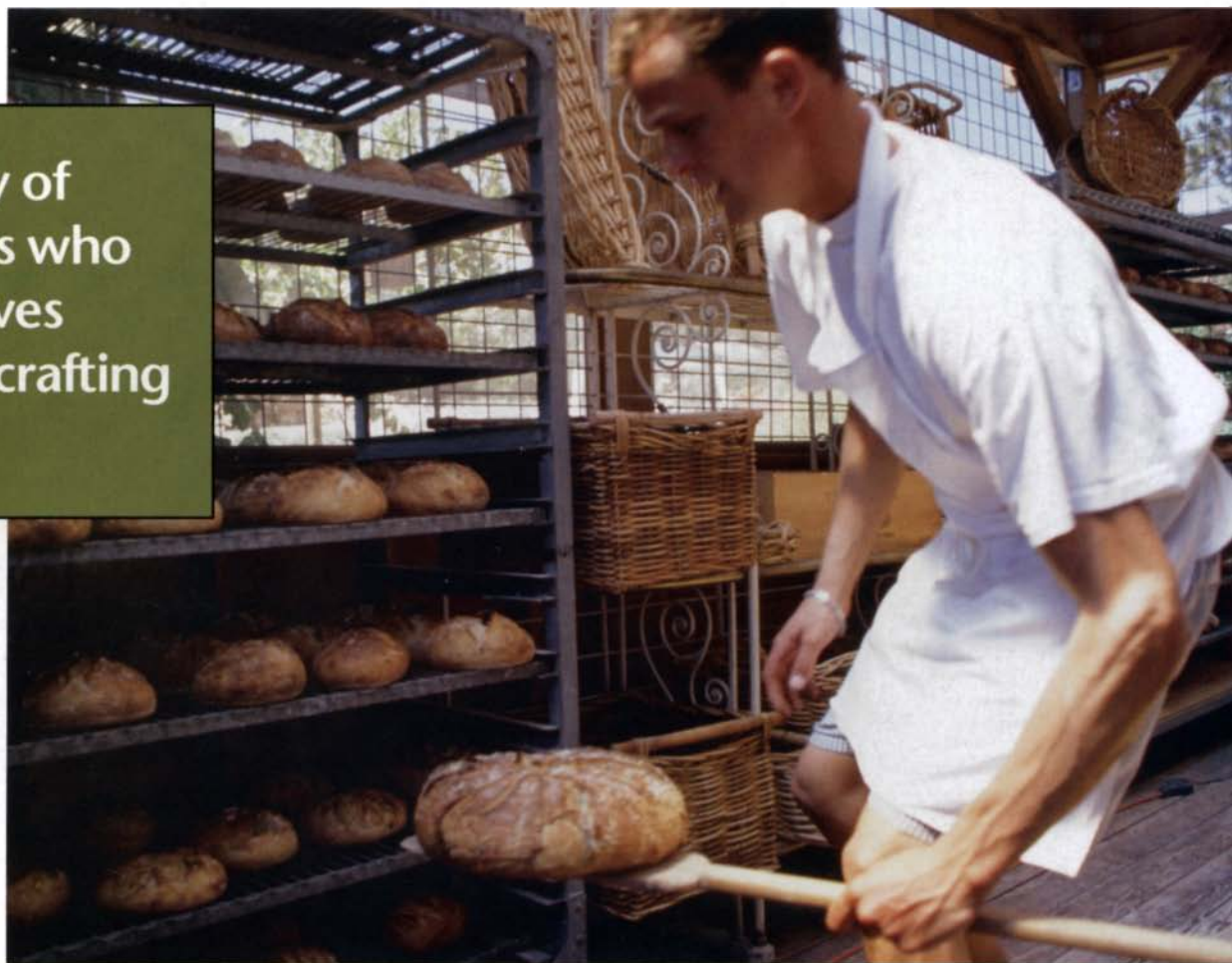


*Garnish by spooning the remaining shallot vinaigrette around the plate and by drizzling the basil oil around the vinaigrette. Finish with a few grinds of black pepper. Serve immediately.*

# Life at the Speed of Bread

Meet a family of artisan bakers who shape their lives around handcrafting rustic bread

BY AMY ALBERT



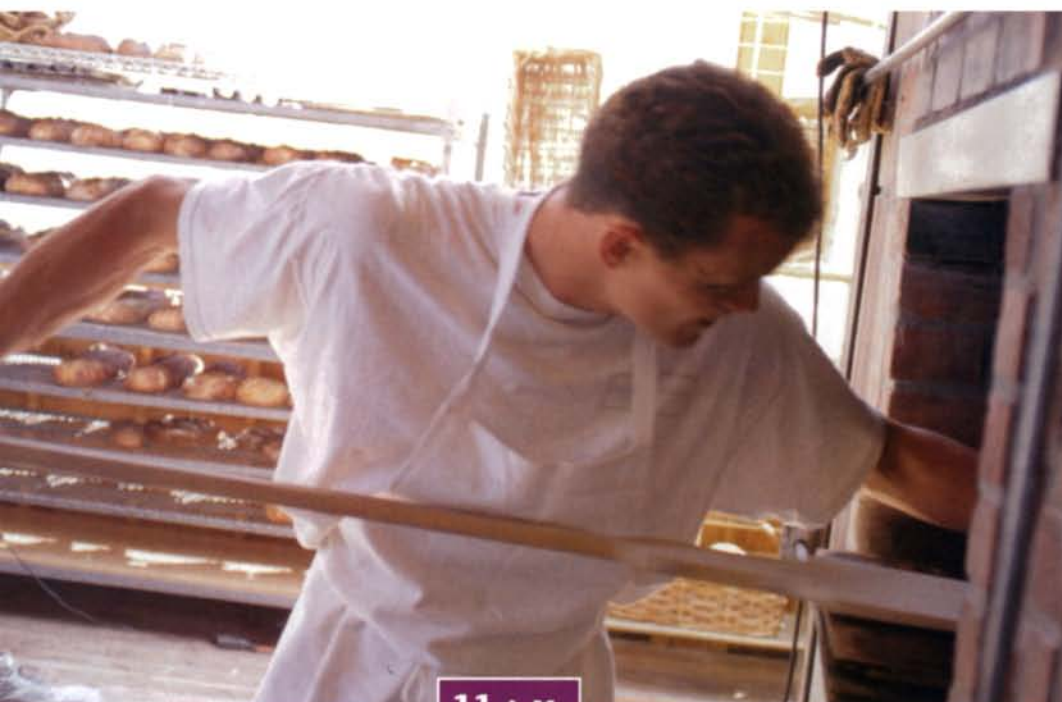
*Aaron Weber peels hot loaves from Della Fattoria's wood-burning brick oven.*

At some point—especially if you love baking—you’ve probably wondered how it would be to chuck it all, quit your day job, move to the country, and become a full-time baker. You’d parlay a passion into your life’s work—beholden to no one, your time would be your own. Well, yes and no.

Ed and Kathleen Weber and their son, Aaron, are Della Fattoria, a small bread bakery run from the family’s farmhouse in Petaluma, in California’s Sonoma Valley. The Webers have taken their passion

for breadmaking and turned it into a successful business, realizing a long-time dream. They bake bread every day—on many days, over 300 loaves—for top-of-the-line restaurants and food shops in Napa and Sonoma.

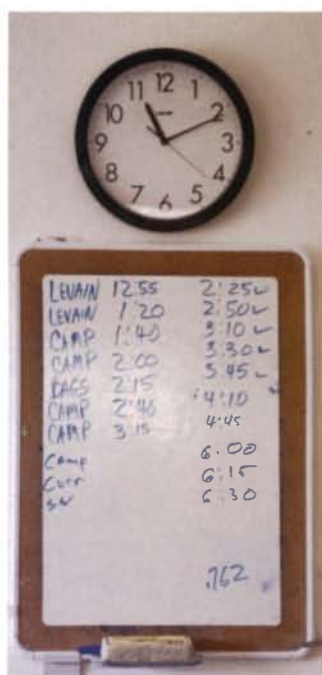
It’s instantly clear that the Webers are soulful folks who love what they do. What a closer look reveals, though, is how completely they shape their lives around everything their bread needs so that it’s perfect every single day.



**11 A.M.**

"Is it wine time yet?" asks Aaron Weber, ready for lunch. Most of us have probably just finished a second cup of coffee, but Aaron has been shaping and baking since 4 a.m., and he's loading the day's last forty-loaf batch into the wood-burning oven.

Sun shines through the screened-in baking and packing area; Sonoma farmland stretches into the distance. Swinging blues are playing in the bakery, it's Mose Allison singing "Your Mind Is on Vacation," but Aaron is all there, his long, lanky frame in constant waltzing motion, spritzing the oven with water, checking the 600°F oven for hot spots, wielding an 8-foot peel to rotate loaves, removing hot breads from the oven, and transferring them to cooling racks—grooving to the music the whole time.



*Bread needs a routine and so does a baker. A marker board helps keep track of times for shaping (left column) and baking (right column).*



*Aaron shapes kalamata olive bread.*



## A Baker's Day at Della Fattoria

### Midnight

Kathleen wakes up to mix dough and prepare other bread ingredients

### 4 a.m.

Kathleen goes to sleep; Aaron wakes up, sweeps out oven, and mixes tomorrow's starter

### 5 a.m.

Aaron shapes and proofs loaves

### 7 a.m.

Ed wakes up to feed the animals, tend to farm chores, and prepare for morning deliveries

### 7:30 a.m.

Kathleen wakes up to shape and bake with Aaron

### 11:30 a.m.

Morning deliveries in northern Sonoma

### 2 p.m.

Last loaves out of oven; feed tomorrow's starter

### 2 to 6 p.m.

Deliveries in Sonoma and Napa valleys

### 6 p.m.

Feed tomorrow's starter; tomorrow's planning; Ed starts the fire and tends it until midnight

### 9 p.m.

Aaron goes to sleep; Kathleen goes to sleep

### Midnight

Ed goes to sleep; Kathleen wakes up



**1 P.M.**

After a short lunch, the pace picks up again. It's Tuesday, one of the Webers' heaviest workdays. Not only are there deliveries to make, but there's the Sonoma Valley Farmers' Market on the plaza in front of the old town hall. Ed's off in the van for a round of restaurant and retail deliveries, while Aaron and Kathleen are bagging loaves, counting them, loading them into big baskets, checking and rechecking restaurant and retail orders, and separating out the breads to be sold at today's market.



*Aaron and Kathleen check orders before packing up for afternoon deliveries.*

*"Most days we still can't believe how lucky we are to be able to do this," says Kathleen Weber.*





**6 P.M.**

It's a heartbreakingly lovely summer evening, and the five-'til-dusk Sonoma Farmers' Market is in full swing, market stands laden with heirloom produce, flowers, and handmade local condiments. The Weber's bread table is a big attraction. Customers and friends stop by to make purchases and say hello, many hugs are exchanged, and the loaves are selling fast. But Aaron Weber is shaking his head. He's examining a loaf that looks perfect, yet his exacting eye has spotted a small slumped area that reveals too long a rise. Seconds after he points this out, the loaf sells.

A trained chef, Aaron is a proud perfectionist, too, having worked in high-pressure kitchens at such

renowned California restaurants as The French Laundry and Babette's. When the business started getting too big for Ed and Kathleen to handle by themselves, Aaron elected to leave his job as a chef at Babette's to join them. He admits that working alongside his parents has its occasional edgy moments (like when family dynamics creep into the bakery). But the tension disappears fast, and the rewards of working off the family land with his folks ("they mean more than anything to me") far outweigh any difficulties.



## While in Sonoma

If you're ever in this beautiful part of California wine country, you'll find lots to do. Here are a few places that are well worth making time for.

### Chanticleer Books

526 Broadway, Sonoma;  
707/996-5364

### Plaza Books

40 West Spain St., Sonoma;  
707/996-8474

Both stores have sizeable food sections with terrific selections of out-of-print, hard-to-find, obscure, and used cookbooks and wine books.

### The Olive Press

14301 Arnold Dr., Glen Ellen;  
800/965-4839

At this olive oil cooperative, you can watch the pressing from about October through

February. Be sure to sample a few oils—like wine tasting, side-by-side olive oil tasting shows a lot about the character of different oils. Olive oils and olive accoutrements are sold, too.

### Vella Cheese Company

315 Second St. East, Sonoma;  
800/848-0505

Ig Vella's champion Dry Monterey Jack cheese is some of the best I've ever tasted, and he handcrafts other delicious cheeses, too. Call ahead to arrange a look at the tiny, immaculate cheeseworks in back of Vella's retail store.



### Sonoma Farmers' Markets

**Sonoma Plaza**, every Tuesday, April through October; 5:30 p.m. to dusk

**Arnold Field** at First St. West, every Friday, all year; 9 a.m. to noon

Cruise the market for good people-watching and

fine Sonoma Valley produce, flowers, bread, and handmade condiments. The corndogs are tasty, too.

### Ravenswood Vineyards

18701 Gehricke Rd., Sonoma;  
888/669-4679

Once-a-day barrel tasting tours are given all year long by well-informed Ravenswood staffers. This is a great chance to taste the vineyard's delicious offerings straight out of the barrel, and to hear practical, accessible talk about how soil, location, and climate affect wine. Tours are by appointment only, so call ahead to make a reservation—the vineyard wisely keeps the tour groups small.



9 P.M.

A musician and organic farmer who speaks in metaphors and jokes in deadpan delivery, Ed Weber is loading 5-foot hunks of eucalyptus into the oven ("the beast"), moving them around to prevent hot spots, and damping the flames with an old baguette pan. It's a nightly task.

Ed is the fire master in the family, and yes, there's definitely a devilish look to him. It's a tricky matter of timing, stoking at a pace so the oven chamber reaches 1,000°F by 4 a.m. in order for it to cool to 600°F by 7 a.m. (just when the loaves are fully proofed and ready to bake), and to sustain the heat until the last bake ends at 2 p.m.

This choreography is a lot harder than it looks. "There's nothing scarier than having 80 loaves left to bake and not enough fire," Ed says, adding, "but we've gotten really good at it." (He admits that when he and Kathleen first started baking, there were mornings where they'd have many loaves of burned, blackened bread.) Ed won't sleep until he's sure the fire is under control, and when he does finally doze off, it's usually at about midnight, on the packing table right in front of the oven.



MIDNIGHT

Kathleen Weber is measuring ingredients in the next room with a relaxed precision that's unique to bakers. With no formal training, she makes some of the most sought-after bread in the Napa-Sonoma area. "It sounds funny to say, but I'm calling on my ancestral bones when I do this," she says. It's obvious: to watch Kathleen work and hear her talk is to see someone who has found a calling. "We never thought about margins or cheaper flour or how much money we could make," she says. "We still bake the bread as if we're baking it for an important person. I think that's part of why we've had this incredible success."

She's at once passionate and pragmatic about the odd hours and erratic sleep required of her ("It's like having a baby. You get such incredible joy that you build a tolerance for little sleep").

Music on the stereo suddenly changes from quiet jazz to heavy metal, and Kathleen is a little rattled. "This music is not good for my bread!" she calls out. Normally, everyone's asleep by now and Kathleen is waking up to do the day's first mix all by herself. But today was her birthday, and Aaron and a few chef friends made a celebratory dinner, which twenty of us ate on the long packing table in the baking area. I close the door to shelter Kathleen and the dough from the revellers, and she keeps working. Her calm rhythm will continue until about 4 a.m., when she'll lie down for a few hours, and Aaron will get up to sweep the oven and start baking.

Amy Albert, who lives in awe of great bread and great bakers, is an associate editor for *Fine Cooking*. ♦

## THE LANGUAGE OF BAKERS

*Breadmakers use jargon that's unique to the craft.*

**bencher**—a dough scraper; helps handle sticky dough while kneading

**gluten**—gives bread its elasticity; formed when protein in flour touches water

**mother; starter;**

**levain**—a natural leaven that's a fermented mixture of flour, water, wild yeasts, and bacteria (Della Fattoria makes its starters from the skins of their own organically grown grapes for authentic, rustic results)

**peel**—a long-handled flat board for moving dough to the oven

**proof**—a baker's term for *rise* (some call it a proof only after the dough undergoes its initial rise and has been shaped into loaves)

**proofing basket; banneton**—a basket that supports shaped dough, helping it keep its shape as it rises

**proofing cloth; couche**—a linen cloth that supports shaped dough, helping it keep its shape as it rises

**shaping**—the process of molding risen dough into loaves

**sourdough**—a bread that's leavened with a fermented or "soured" starter

# Juicy, Just-Picked Strawberries Star in Early Summer Desserts

Take advantage of strawberry season with four stunning summer desserts from The French Laundry's pastry chef

BY STEPHEN DURFEE

For anyone who likes making desserts, one of the most eagerly anticipated events of the spring is the first appearance of strawberries at the local market. That first sweet bite of the season is so incredibly satisfying, suggests so many possibilities, that dessert recipes practically writes themselves. Plump, juicy, fragrant, and full of flavor, strawberries are nature's reward for our patience throughout the winter, a welcome relief from the sameness of citrus, and a sneak preview of the other summer berries to come. Strawberries are wonderfully versatile and lend themselves to a variety of desserts, from granitas and sorbets to tarts and terrines. And since the season is relatively short, we should, as the saying goes, "get while the gettin's good."

## PICK YOUR OWN STRAWBERRIES OR CHOOSE THE REDDEST, RIPEST FRUIT

Everyone knows that commercially grown strawberries are now in the grocery stores nearly year-round. But sadly, the availability of this fruit has been achieved at the expense of flavor. To truly enjoy the heady flavor of perfectly ripe strawberries,



you must eat locally grown berries while they're in season.

Surely, the way to the best strawberries is to pick them yourself. If you're lucky enough to live in a rural area, you may have access to "pick-your-own" fruit farms. Picking your own strawberries has several advantages, not the least of which is guaranteed freshness. Strawberries are fragile fruits susceptible to bruising, so the less handling they receive, the better. And there's no substitute for the sun-warmed, bursting-with-juice, perfectly ripe strawberries picked in the field. Besides, it's fun to harvest berries yourself.

If you can't get to a strawberry farm, the next best option is your local farmers' market or fruit stand. At the farmers' market, you may have several varieties from which to choose, and you're generally able, even encouraged, to sample them all. At the peak of the season, even grocery stores will carry good strawberries, though rarely do you have the opportunity to



*The sabayon topping for these sliced strawberries gets a tangy-sweet edge from balsamic vinegar.*

taste. Whatever you do, try to buy strawberries that are locally grown; they'll have had more time to ripen on the vine than berries shipped across the country.

#### **BUY DEEP-RED BERRIES AND THEN LEAVE THEM ALONE**

Because good looks don't necessarily mean good taste, always try to sample before you buy. There are, however, a few good visual clues. Look for plump, fully red berries with dark green leaves still attached, and avoid excessively seedy fruit—a sign of old age and a real nuisance on the teeth. Examine the bottom of the package; damp cardboard may indicate berries that are spoiling. Once you're home, store the berries in a cool spot (but preferably not the refrigerator—that much cold can dull the fruit's flavor) and plan to eat them within two or three days. In general, I don't like to wash berries because they absorb water, which dilutes their flavor. But if you want to wash them, clean them before hulling to avoid filling the cavity with water, and spread the berries out in one layer on paper towels to dry. Or, if you're feeling particularly luxurious, rinse your berries with Champagne or a fruity wine and let them absorb all they want.

#### **PAIR SWEET STRAWBERRIES WITH TART FLAVORS**

I like to turn the first strawberries of spring into a traditional shortcake garnish, but I don't stop there. Strawberries' pleasant sweetness makes them perfect partners for more tart flavors, which is why you often see them paired with rhubarb. I like to macerate strawberries with a mixture of sugar and fresh lime or lemon juice for a tart-sweet jumble that's a perfect refresher for a warm spring day. In summer, I take this idea one step further by turning that combination of strawberries and lemon into a cool "pink lemonade" granita. I also like to pair a dry sparkling wine with strawberries to make a light and elegant strawberry and Champagne terrine.

**For textural contrast, serve strawberries with a creamy topping like a billowy sabayon.** For an elegant dressing for a dish of strawberries, I like to make the traditional custard sauce known



*The Strawberry & Champagne Terrine gets a tilted first layer. Prop the loaf pan at a 45-degree angle with a wedge of cheese or something similar.*

as a sabayon. But instead of using the sweet Marsala that's traditional in this sauce, I use a complex aged balsamic vinegar to turn this simple sauce into something extraordinary. And instead of a traditional cheesecake with strawberries, I like to make a tart with a crust from finely ground hazelnuts—which offer a slight bitterness—and a filling of mascarpone cheese lightened with whipped cream and a little strawberry purée.

**I like to use my extra strawberries in jams and purées.** Save your older, tired berries for purées; as they dehydrate and wither, their flavor becomes more concentrated. I also like to make a quick "jam" by first macerating hulled berries with an equal amount of sugar (by weight), and then slowly cooking until syrupy; this is a nice treat on pancakes or vanilla ice cream. However you enjoy your strawberries, do it soon. Their season is fleeting, and you don't want to miss it.

There's no substitute for the heady flavor of sun-warmed strawberries.





*Lay the terrine flat for the second layer. Be sure the Champagne layer is firm before pouring in the strawberry purée.*

## Strawberry & Champagne Terrine

This lovely terrine is made in a 6-cup loaf pan, but you can vary the look of it by using two or more smaller molds or mini-loaf pans, or by alternating the Champagne and strawberry components in several layers in one pan. Just be sure that each layer is almost completely set before pouring on another. Serve the well-chilled terrine cut in thin slices. *Serves eight to ten.*

### FOR THE CHAMPAGNE LAYER:

*¼ cup cold water*  
*1 Tbs. powdered gelatin (about 1½ packets)*  
*⅓ cup sugar*  
*1½ cups Champagne or sparkling wine*  
*½ cup sliced strawberries*

### FOR THE STRAWBERRY LAYER:

*1 Tbs. powdered gelatin (about 1½ packets)*  
*2 Tbs. Champagne or sparkling wine*  
*2 pints strawberries, rinsed and hulled*  
*2 tsp. fresh lemon juice*  
*3 to 6 Tbs. sugar*

**For the Champagne layer**—Put the water in a small saucepan, sprinkle the gelatin on top, and leave to soften, about 3 min. Add the sugar and cook over medium-low heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar and melt the gelatin (don't let it boil). In a medium bowl, combine the gelatin mixture and Champagne. Set the bowl over ice and chill, stirring often, until it reaches the consistency of unbeaten egg whites. Carefully stir in the sliced strawberries.

Meanwhile, set a loaf pan in the refrigerator so that it's tilted at a 45-degree angle. (Use a wedge of cheese, sticks of butter, or

*The finished terrine is sparkling and sweet. After unmolding, cut the terrine into thin slices and serve with more fresh berries.*



something similar to prop up the pan.) Pour the Champagne mixture into the pan. Let sit until just set, about 2 hours.

**For the strawberry layer**—In a small saucepan, soften the gelatin in the 2 Tbs. Champagne, about 3 min. Set the pan over low heat and heat to dissolve the gelatin. Purée the berries with the lemon juice, add the sugar to taste, and then strain the mixture through a fine sieve. Whisk the softened gelatin into the strawberry purée.

Once the Champagne layer has almost set, set the loaf pan on a level surface (preferably in the refrigerator so that it won't have to be moved) and carefully pour in the strawberry purée. Refrigerate at least 6 hours but preferably overnight. To unmold the terrine, cover a cutting board with waxed paper, dip the loaf pan quickly into hot water, and invert it onto the board. Slice the terrine into ½-inch portions; garnish with sliced fresh strawberries, if you like.

## Strawberry Hazelnut Torte

While the hazelnut crust is cooking, make the strawberry, whipped cream, and mascarpone filling and let it firm up in the refrigerator. When the crust is completely cool and the filling is chilled, you can assemble the torte and refrigerate it for a couple of hours before

serving. Some ingredients are listed by weight (ounces) and by volume (cups, tablespoons); use either measurement. *Serves eight to ten.*

**FOR THE CRUST:**

4 oz. (about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup) whole hazelnuts (unskinned)

$\frac{3}{4}$  cup sugar

4½ oz. (1 cup) all-purpose flour

6 oz. (12 Tbs.) cold butter, cut in pieces

1 egg yolk

$\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. vanilla extract

**FOR THE FILLING:**

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup sugar

1 pint strawberries, rinsed if necessary, hulled, puréed, and strained (to yield 1 cup), and then chilled

1 cup well-chilled heavy cream

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup mascarpone

**FOR THE TOPPING:**

Very small or quartered strawberries, rinsed and hulled

**To make the crust**—Heat the oven to 350°F. Pulse the hazelnuts in a food processor until finely chopped. Add the sugar and flour and pulse to combine. Add the butter pieces and pulse until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add the egg yolk and vanilla extract and process until the dough just comes together.

Lightly flour your fingertips and press the dough into a 9-inch spring-form pan. Gently make a large depression in the center of the dough to create about a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rim all the way around the edge of the crust. Bake the crust until puffed, lightly browned, and a pick comes out with just a few crumbs, 45 to 50 min. Cool completely on rack. Slide a knife around the edges of the pan before removing the sides of the pan. Slide a spatula under the crust to loosen it, and then remove the crust from the bottom of the pan.

**To make the filling**—Stir the sugar into the strawberry purée and return the mixture to the refrigerator. Whip the cream until it forms firm peaks. In a separate bowl, whisk one-quarter of the whipped cream into the mascarpone and then fold in the remaining whipped cream. Gently fold in the chilled purée. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour and up to 24 hours. The filling will firm up as it chills.

**To assemble the torte**—Gently spoon the chilled filling into the torte shell. Don't level the filling—leave it looking free-form—and scatter the small or quartered strawberries across the top. Cut into wedges and serve.



*Bake a buttery hazelnut crust ahead of time, spoon in a creamy mascarpone filling and the tiniest strawberries you can find, and serve this luscious torte sliced like a pie.*

Look for plump, fully red berries with dark green leaves still attached.



### Frozen Strawberry "Pink Lemonade"

This easy granita makes a light and refreshing dessert. *Yields about 3½ cups.*

*2¼ cups water  
1 cup sugar  
½ cup fresh lemon juice  
½ pint strawberries, rinsed if necessary, puréed, and strained  
(to yield about ½ cup)  
Crisp cookies for garnish (optional)*

In a saucepan, combine the water and sugar and cook over medium heat until the sugar is dissolved. Remove from the heat and add the lemon juice and strawberry purée. Pour the mixture into a shallow pan or dish and put it in the freezer. Stir with a fork every 30 to 40 min. to create a flaky texture, until all the liquid is frozen. Serve the granita in chilled glasses and garnish with fresh strawberries and crisp cookies, if you like.

### Strawberries with Balsamic Sabayon

Serve fresh strawberries with this chilled creamy sabayon sauce enhanced with balsamic vinegar. The sauce will taste complex and delicious with a really good quality aged balsamic, but it's wonderful as well when made with a more ordinary balsamic. *Serves eight.*

*6 Tbs. sugar  
4 egg yolks  
2 Tbs. aged balsamic vinegar  
1½ cups heavy cream, whipped to medium-stiff peaks  
and refrigerated  
1 pint strawberries, rinsed if necessary and hulled  
Crisp cookies for garnish (optional)*

**To make the sabayon**—Set aside a big bowl of ice. In a small stainless-steel bowl, whisk the sugar into the egg yolks until thoroughly combined and lightened in color. Set the bowl over a saucepan of simmering water and continue whisking the mixture until it thickens. The mixture is cooked when it's light in color and it trails off the whisk in ribbons. Do not overcook it. Remove the bowl from the heat and whisk in the balsamic vinegar. Set the bowl over the bowl of ice and continue whisking the sabayon until it's completely cooled, 5 to 10 min. The sabayon will stiffen as it cools. Very gently fold in the whipped cream and refrigerate the lightened sabayon for at least 2 hours before serving. It will hold overnight, but it's best served the day it's made.

Serve the sabayon draped over whole or sliced strawberries in a pretty glass dish with a garnish of crisp cookies, whole or crumbled, if you like.

*Frozen strawberry  
"pink lemonade"  
is an incredibly  
refreshing granita  
that you can make  
with just a blender,  
a pan, and a fork.*

Photo at top right: Martha Holmberg

Stephen Durfee is the pastry chef at The French Laundry in Yountville, California. ♦

## Squeeze, flatten, or strike—pitting olives without frustration

Whole olives can be marvelous as a simple appetizer, but if you want to use them in tapenades, stews, or other dishes, they usually need to be pitted. The technique you use to remove the pit usually depends on the type of olive. Some have flesh that sticks to the

pit simply by pinching both ends of the olive between your forefingers and thumbs. Tiny niçoise olives are particularly easy, as are most leathery and shriveled oil- or salt-cured olives. The flesh slides off with no resistance.

**Meaty, firm olives require a bit more force.** Green olives (which are cured from unripe olives) and even some of the harder black olives need some prodding to make them give up their pits.

When I have to pit a lot of such stubborn olives, I use the side of a heavy chef's knife. I put the olive on a work surface, set the flat side of the knife on top, and give it a good whack. The force splits open the olive and frees the pit. Be sure to wipe the knife blade frequently because it gets oily—and very slippery—after splitting a few olives.

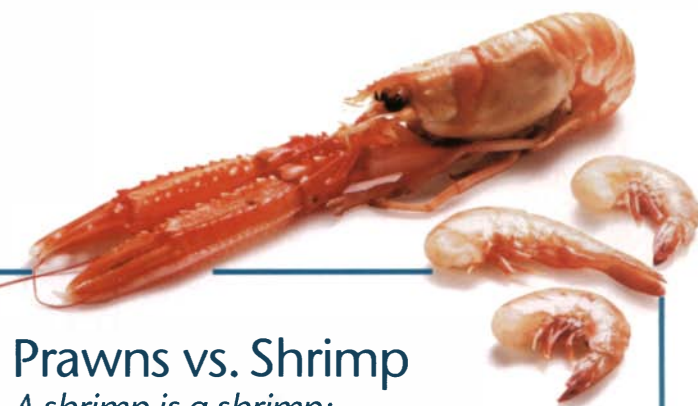
Some chefs prefer another method. They place the olive on a steady work surface and flatten it with their thumb until they can feel the pit. This loosens the pit and usually cracks the flesh enough to squeeze or pull the pit out.



For stubborn olives, a good whack with the side of a chef's knife will expose the pit.

pit, while other varieties are softer and will yield their pits with less of a struggle.

**The pits of some soft black olives slip right out.** Many varieties of brine-cured black olives, like Gaeta, are so soft that you can force out the



## Prawns vs. Shrimp

*A shrimp is a shrimp;  
a prawn is, well, a shrimp*

Whoever wrote the lyrics "You say tomato, I say tomahto" could just as well have added the verse, "You say shrimp, I say prawn." The two words are used interchangeably in markets and restaurants everywhere. The textbooks may agree that a shrimp is a shrimp, but many people (and quite a few cookbooks) refer to this most popular of shellfish as a prawn.

Some people say the difference is size. In many parts of the country, small and medium shrimp are sold simply as shrimp, while large, extra-large, and jumbo shrimp are called prawns. Unfortunately, this "rule" doesn't always hold. In some areas, all shrimp, small and large, are sold as shrimp, while in other regions, all you'll find are prawns.

Purists may argue that the term "prawn" is reserved for the shrimp's close relative, the Dublin Bay prawn. The Dublin Bay prawn resembles a shrimp, but it's distinguished by its small pincer claws (similar to those on a lobster) and a narrower body. Sometimes called Florida or Caribbean lobsterettes or French langoustines, these shellfish can be hard to find in markets. And unlike shrimp, Dublin Bay prawns are usually cooked with their heads on. The claws make quite an attractive presentation, although they're too tiny to render any meat.

In Italy, Dublin Bay prawns are called scampi, which has confused Americans even more. In the United States, scampi refers to a dish of large shrimp that are cooked with garlic and butter or olive oil.

## Season (and clean) your grill to keep tender foods from sticking

Much of the pleasure of grilling is the sheer simplicity of it. Light a fire, throw on the food, flip it once, and presto—dinner. But when I'm cooking delicate or very lean foods, such as fish or unmarinated chicken, I add one quick step—I lightly oil the grill just before cooking. The touch of oil helps prevent sticking; it also leaves nicely defined grill marks on the food.

**Use a rolled-up dishtowel or long-handled brush to apply a thin coat of**

**vegetable oil.** Whether you're grilling over charcoal or gas, let the grill heat up for a few minutes, and then oil the grate at the last minute.

**A clean, well-seasoned grill is almost naturally nonstick.** The best way to clean a grill is to scrape it with a wire brush after you've finished cooking but before the embers have gone out. The charred bits will come off more easily this way, and they can fall right into the

dying fire and burn up. With frequent use and diligent cleaning, your grill will become as well seasoned as a good cast-iron pan. To foster this kind of natural seasoning after the grill has been sitting in the garage for months, I oil the grill during spring cookouts, no matter what's on the menu.

Molly Stevens is a contributing editor to Fine Cooking. ♦

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## Enjoying Sesame's Earthy, Nutty Appeal

I'm addicted to sesame. Almost no Chinese dish feels complete to me without it. Sesame is also widely used in Japanese, Middle Eastern, and Indian cuisines. Sesame seeds add a nutty, slightly sweet flavor and a subtle crunch to sweet and savory foods. A few drops of rich, amber sesame oil go a long way in flavoring marinades, sautés, and dressings. And sesame paste makes a flavorful base for sauces and dips.

### SESAME SEEDS ADD TEXTURE AND DEPTH

The sesame plant is an annual herb that grows to about four feet. It thrives in warm climates and is cultivated in China, Japan, the Middle East, Mexico, and Central America. The seeds can be white, brown, or black with little difference in flavor. The slightly

more earthy black ones lend a pretty, playful contrast, especially when used in breads and light-colored dishes.

Buy sesame seeds in small plastic bags or glass jars from supermarkets or Chinese grocers. Because they're 50% oil, the seeds can become rancid quickly if exposed to heat and light. Stored in an airtight glass container in a cool, dry place, they should keep for many months, but do smell and taste them for freshness before you add them to a dish.

**Toast sesame seeds for a deeper flavor.** Raw sesame seeds are pretty bland, so I almost always toast them. This is especially important if you're adding them to a cooked dish. Toasting works magic in bringing out flavor, and when white seeds are toasted, they take on a delightful golden hue.

*Try sesame in all of its many forms.*

*Raw or toasted, sesame oil, paste, and seeds add flavor and often texture to all kinds of food.*

Toast sesame seeds in a dry skillet over low heat, stirring occasionally. White seeds

brown in three to five minutes. Keep your eye on them: they burn easily. When toasting black seeds, you won't see any color change, so just warm them over low heat, listen for one or two to pop, and then pour them onto a plate to cool.

### A LITTLE SESAME OIL CAN GO A LONG WAY

Sesame oil can be pressed from raw or toasted seeds; each produces a very different result. The oil pressed from toasted seeds is thick, rich, and deep amber, and it's best used sparingly as a final flavoring. The lighter colored oil from raw seeds doesn't have the perfume or flavor of dark oil, but its subtler, lighter taste makes it better suited for general cooking.

Buy sesame oil in glass bottles, which protect it far better than plastic. You can

find sesame oil at most supermarkets. For toasted sesame oil, look for brands from Asia. My favorite is the pure, full-flavored Kadoya from Japan. Keep sesame oil in a cool, dry place, away from direct light. If you don't go through a bottle quickly, store it in the fridge.

### SESAME PASTE IS A GREAT BASE FOR TASTY SAUCES

Sesame paste, made from ground seeds, thickens sauces and adds flavor. In the Middle East, the paste is made from raw seeds and is called tahini. Tahini is lighter in color and taste than Asian sesame paste, which is made from crushed toasted seeds. Tahini is the base for traditional dips such as *hummus* and *baba ghanouj*. Asian cooks use their toasted paste as a dressing for cold dishes, or as a sauce or main flavoring for hot dishes.

Kept in the refrigerator, sesame paste will stay fresh for quite a while, but check it periodically for freshness. If the paste has separated in the jar, remix it by hand or in a blender before using it.

Ken Hom's latest book is *Easy Family Recipes from a Chinese-American Childhood* (Knopf, 1997). ♦

## Experiment with sesame

- ♦ Sprinkle toasted sesame seeds on steamed vegetables or green salads for added flavor and texture.
- ♦ Fold raw seeds into bread dough for a nutty flavor and heartier texture.
- ♦ Roll dropped cookie dough in raw sesame seeds just before baking for a toasty, crunchy exterior.
- ♦ Use sesame seeds in place of nuts for an unusual brittle.
- ♦ Add a few drops of toasted sesame oil to your favorite marinade or vinaigrette. Or add some to a hot soup just before serving.
- ♦ Mix toasted sesame paste with vinegar, soy sauce, and chile paste or hot sauce for a great Asian dipping sauce.

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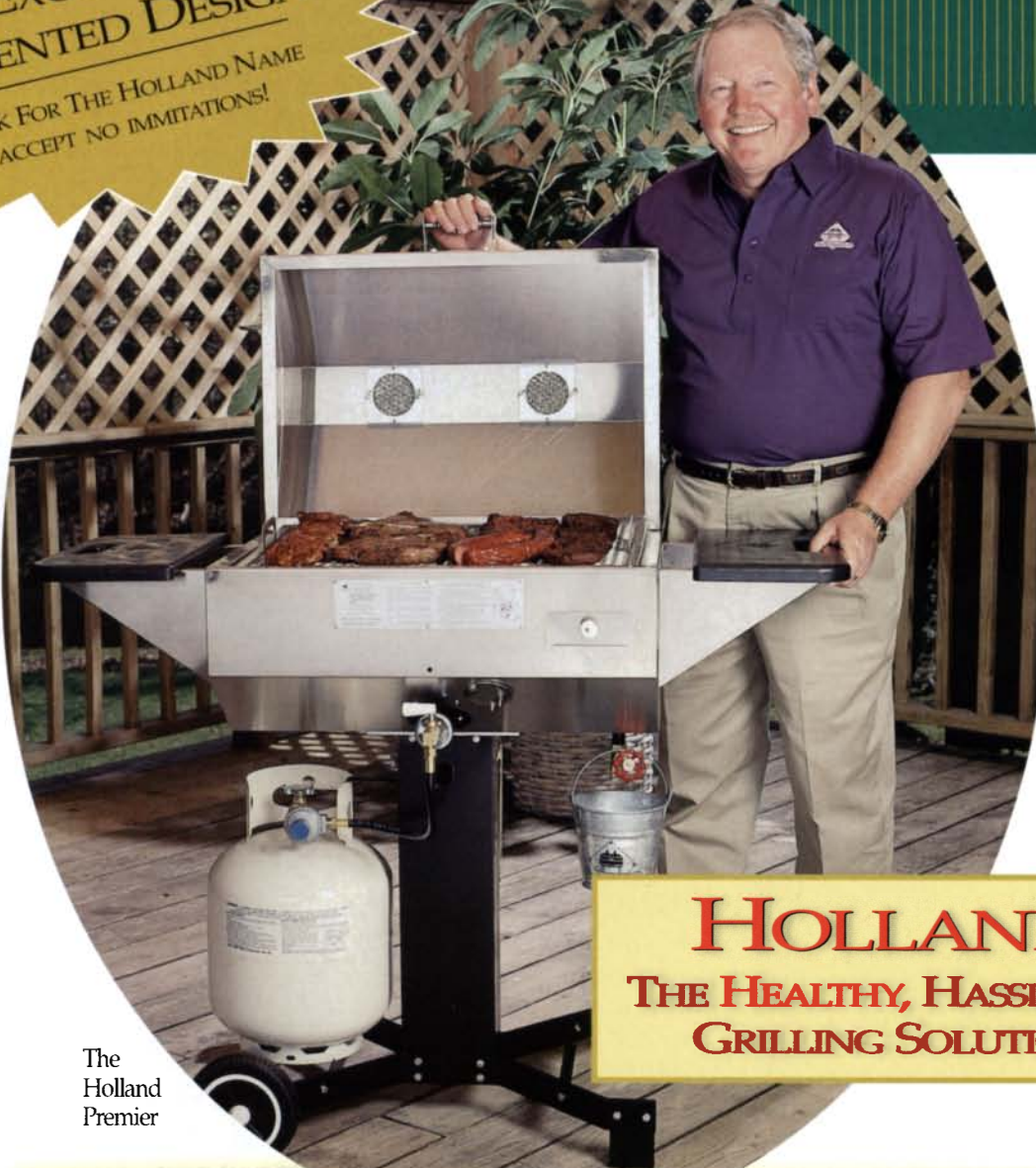


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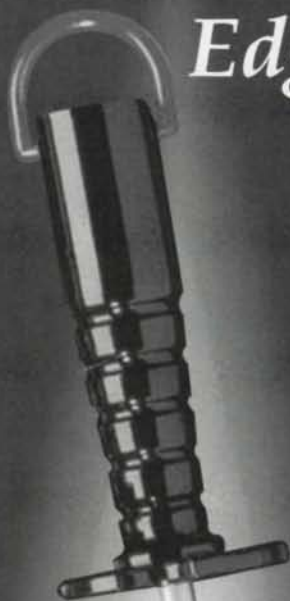


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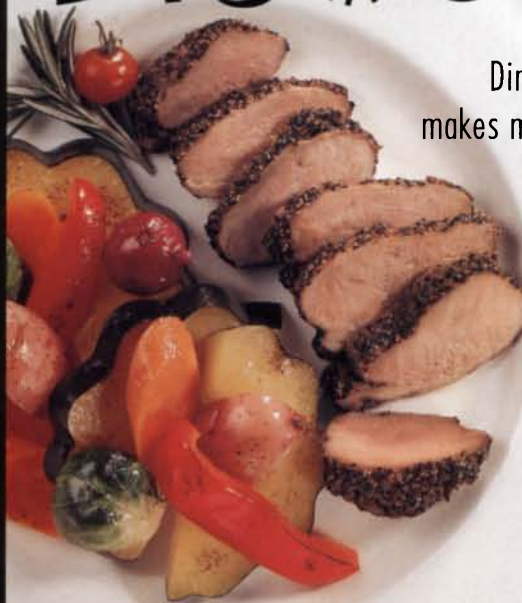
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*No, it's not trick lighting—One half of this chicken was brushed with the author's basting liquid (see sidebar); the other half was brushed with oil. Can you tell which half is which?*

## Controlling Browning for Better-Looking, Better-Tasting Food

Cooking is all about the transformation of ingredients, and one of the most important transformations takes place when ingredients make the journey, via heat, from soft, pale, and wan to lusty, crusty, and golden brown. So many foods—from fish fillets to apple fritters—develop a beautiful brown exterior when properly cooked, which makes them appealing to look at and, more important, much more flavorful and pleasantly textured.

This type of browning—which produces crusty brown loaves of bread, crisp cookies, the crunchy brown coating of fried food, the rich brown glaze of a roast, or the gutsy brown grill marks on a steak—

is nonenzymatic browning, caused by reactions of proteins and certain sugars with heat. (This is different from the less desirable browning caused by enzymes—for example, when

**Sugar, protein, and acid are key factors in browning.**

fruit is cut or bruised and the phenolic compounds react with the oxygen in the air.)

Nonenzymatic browning can occur two ways: the simple browning of sucrose (white

sugar) at high temperatures, and the more complex browning of certain sugars and proteins at lower temperatures.

The first type of browning is true caramelization. When you cook sucrose to very high temperatures (over 300°F), it melts and then starts to caramelize (or decompose). During this process, different sugars form, break apart, and some of these new sugars rejoin. At any point between clear melted sugar and dark caramel, there is a different mixture of sugars; more than 128 different sugars have been identified. Many of these are brown in color and have the wonderful taste that we associate with caramel, so when this reaction is carefully con-

### What to do for more browning

♦ **For roasted poultry**, make a basting liquid of a little corn syrup (which contains glucose, a reducing sugar), butter (which has both proteins and sugars from the milk), and consommé (the stock and the gelatin in consommé both add protein).

♦ **For roasted meats**, near the end of cooking time, raise the temperature of the oven to get fast browning. By then, lots of the juices (which contain sugars and proteins) have evaporated on the surface of the meat so it will brown well.

♦ **For cookies**, add a little more baking soda (to reduce the acidity) than you need for leavening, which is about ¼ teaspoon per cup of flour. The cookies won't puff more, but they'll get darker faster.

♦ **For cookies and other baked goods**, use a higher protein flour (unbleached instead of bleached, all-purpose instead of cake flour, or bread flour instead of all-purpose). Alternatively, substitute corn syrup (glucose) or an egg yolk or milk (protein) for part of the liquid in the recipe.

trolled, you can enjoy caramel sauce, caramel candies, and caramel flavoring in desserts or even in savory dishes.

The second kind of browning, called the Maillard reactions (named for the chemist who first described them), is a series of complex reactions that produce essentially the same sweet brown compounds

## To reduce or delay browning

- ◆ **For pie crusts that must bake a long time**, like in a pecan pie, use a low-protein flour (cake flour or bleached all-purpose), eliminate sugar in the crust, and maybe add a teaspoon of vinegar or lemon juice.
- ◆ **For deep-fried foods**, eliminate sugar in the batter and use a low-protein flour or cornstarch for the batter or for dusting. In doughs that require high-protein flour, like a beignet, add a little lemon juice or vinegar to the batter to make it more acidic.
- ◆ **For roasting or grilling**, brush only with oil to slow browning.
- ◆ **For cookies**, use cake flour or acidic ingredients like vinegar, lemon juice, or cream of tartar.

that you get in caramel, plus many others. Everything from toast to fried chicken and roast beef gets this rich-tasting brown coating from the complex reactions that occur when proteins and certain sugars are heated.

These Maillard reactions differ from simple caramelization (though the two types of browning can take place at the same time) in that they require several ingredients, not just table sugar. Although accelerated by heat, they can

occur at low temperatures—even as low as room temperature. Four conditions are necessary for this browning:

- ◆ a nonacidic environment (conditions below pH 7—a measure of acidity—are acidic. Ideal conditions for browning are pH 7.8 to pH 9.2);
  - ◆ the presence of proteins;
  - ◆ the presence of certain types of sugar (called reducing sugars, of which corn syrup is the most familiar example); and
  - ◆ a low to medium moisture level (foods won't brown if they are very wet).
- As long as the acidity and moisture are low, the more protein and the more reducing sugars present, the browner the food will get.

Sometimes you need to make your food browner, for example, when cookies are actually fully cooked but they still look a little too blond and bland. In other cases, browning may occur too quickly, for example with battered onion rings: the batter may be dark brown but the onions inside are still raw and sharp-tasting.

You can boost or tone down the Maillard reactions by manipulating acid, proteins, and sugar. I've suggested ways to do this in the charts at left.

*Shirley O. Corriher, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is the author of Cook Wise (William Morrow, 1997). She teaches cooking classes and food science across the country.* ◆



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## At the Market

To buy seeds for wonderful varieties of summer squash, try Renee's Garden (888/880-7228) or Shepherd's Garden Seeds (800/475-0148).

## A Summer Provençal Menu

Salt-packed anchovies and capers like Alice Waters uses in her tapenade are available at many Italian specialty markets and by mail from Zingerman's Delicatessen (422 Detroit St., Ann Arbor, MI 48106; 313/769-1625) and Vivande Porta Via (2125 Fillmore St., San Francisco, CA 94115; 415/346-4430).

For a mortar and pestle similar to the one Alice uses to make her basil *pistou*, try Adriana's

Caravan (409 Vanderbilt St., Brooklyn, NY 11218; 800/316-0820) and Sur La Table (1765 Sixth Ave. South, Seattle, WA 98134-1608; 800/243-0852).

## Roasts on the Grill

Molly Stevens prefers the clean taste and hot burn of real hardwood charcoal. Look for it in your local market or call People's Woods at 800/729-5800 (in Rhode Island, 401/725-2700).

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Cabela's (800/237-4444) is an outdoor equipment supplier with a selection of simple propane outdoor burners, cookers, and grills.

## Cool Noodle Salads

You can buy rice noodles, fish sauce, ground chile paste, and many more flavorful Asian ingredients from A Taste of Thai (800/243-0897) and The Oriental Pantry (800/828-0368). For noodles, try Eden Organic (800/248-0320).

## Master Class: Lobster Napoleon

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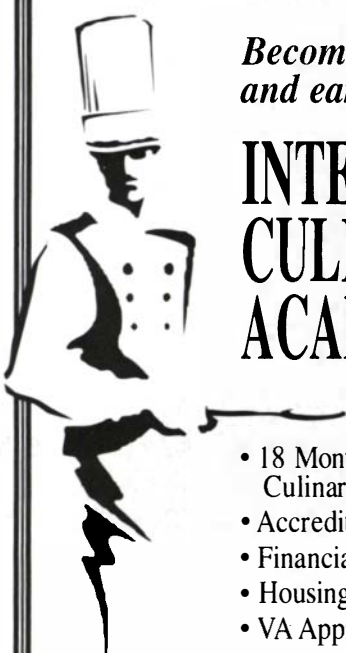
sheet liner and an offset spatula. Both items can be ordered from A Cook's Wares (800/915-9788).

DuPont also makes an inexpensive baking sheet liner that works well, called the Teflon Bakeware Liner; to find the store nearest you, call DuPont at 800/986-2857.

Charlie also likes Consorzio's basil oil as a good alternative to homemade. You can call Consorzio (800/288-1089 ext. 113) to find a local store that carries their products.

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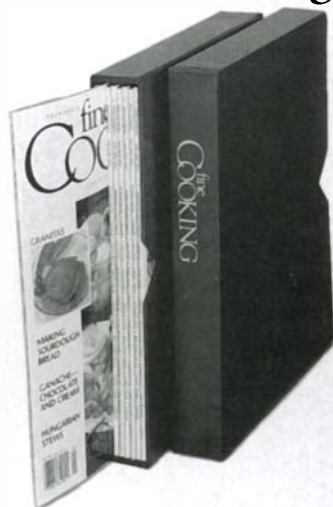
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# A Book to Boost Your Confidence with a "Fix" for Every Problem

I am one of the hundreds of cooks who came of culinary age in the 1980s on the rue St. Dominique in the kitchens of Anne Willan's Parisian cooking school, La Varenne. In fact, my experience at La Varenne made such an impact on me that I wound up working for Anne Willan on and off for years afterward.

What was it that impressed me so much about La Varenne's methods? I think it was that Willan and her staff never let an opportunity to learn slide by. At the end of each cooking class, she would enthusiastically critique each dish that the class had prepared. Even if a student tried to hide a failure, Willan insisted that the mistake be presented, only to discuss what went wrong, what went right, and how to rectify a problem.

Now, as I read Willan's latest book, *Cook It Right*, I'm reminded of those sessions and of Willan's honest admission that cooking is difficult, and that to become great cooks, we must learn from our mistakes. I find her attitude so refreshing in an age where too many recipes spout the "quick and easy" mantra. Certainly there are plenty of quick and easy recipes in *Cook It Right*, but we're also warned that

"poached eggs can be tricky," or "vegetable purées are more of a challenge than they seem." Instead of discouraging readers, this attitude inspires us with the realization that cooking deserves serious attention. The only way to become a good cook is to step up and get involved.

Fortunately, with *Cook It Right* in our hands, we can step up and get involved with an able coach by our side to advise us on our journey. In the text of *Cook It Right*,

Willan admits that one of the best ways to become a great cook is to make some mistakes.

Willan offers detailed explanations on how to cook everything from shellfish to soufflés, with more than 150 appealing recipes (from homey to elegant) and so many inspirational ways to flavor and serve foods that cooks of all levels are bound to find this book useful.

*Cook It Right* is organized into eleven color-coded chapters, beginning with main-dish ingredients (fish,

meat, and poultry) and moving through sauces, vegetables, pastas, grains and legumes, and on to fruits and all things sweet and baked. The chapters address ingredients one by one (e.g., scallops, whole turkey, figs, and tomatoes) as well as general categories (meat stews, braised

and glazed vegetables, filled pies and quiches, and such).

The soul of this gorgeous book is in the hundreds of color photographs that show side-by-side examples of food cooked perfectly and food cooked less than perfectly. Each photo has a detailed caption describing the texture and consistency of the finished dish, and for the less-than-perfect results, an explanation of what went wrong

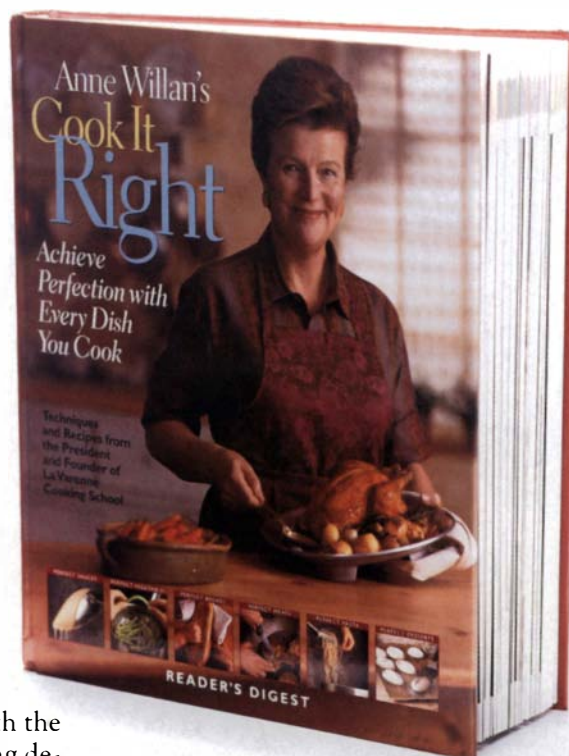
Anne Willan's *Cook It Right*, by Anne Willan. Reader's Digest, 1998. \$29.95, hardcover; 320 pp. ISBN 0-89577-932-3.

and what to do about it.

While the recipes and photos are important starting points, Willan encourages us, in her

friendly yet passionate voice, to taste, feel, evaluate, and decide for ourselves what we think is "right." This is not a book of pretense and absolute rules, but a book to help cooks control the outcomes in their own kitchens.

And when the outcome is less than perfect, Willan takes the learning process a step further by offering a "quick fix" for problems that could arise in every cooking method she covers. These tips range from the simple suggestion that a bay leaf will sweeten strong-smelling vegetables to a short recipe for a fennel vinaigrette to revive overcooked asparagus. The quick fixes are written with the confidence and creativity of one who knows that good ingredients should never be wasted. While there's no way to fix a fallen soufflé, there's no reason not to cut it into wedges like a quiche and serve it with a green salad. If the fish is overcooked, we're advised to pretend it was intentional and simply add more sauce.



If the chocolate mousse doesn't set, call it a sauce.

I couldn't resist trying several recipes from *Cook It Right*, and based on those, I'll be making many more. The Pork Tenderloin with Muscat & Dried Cranberries moved my husband to exclaim, "Who needs fancy restaurants?" The sauce had a beautiful dark sheen, a touch of cinnamon gave the entire dish depth, and the thick medallions remained succulent even after waiting for the sauce to reduce.

I liked the Sautéed Peppery Greens enough to make it a light supper with a simple bowl of pasta. And, in the dessert realm, I enjoyed the Hazelnut Pound Cake so



much that I found myself wondering why I don't bake more often. I served it with the recommended Chocolate & Stout Sauce, and, as a testament to Willan's philosophy that "the fewer the ingredients, the better they must be," I used Guinness stout and Val-

rhona chocolate—the result was nothing short of perfect.

I made the Prosciutto Cream Sauce for broiled scallops and loved the rich, piquant flavor, but I found the consistency to be more like a creamy filling. So, in the spirit of the book, I invented a quick fix of my own and used

*Open Cook It Right to any page, and you'll find comforting advice, a delicious recipe, and photos of a perfectly cooked—and not so perfectly cooked—dish.*

the leftover sauce as an omelet filling. It was sublime.

For me, reading *Cook It Right* was like an armchair visit to the world's best market with an energetic and authoritative teacher at my side offering sage advice on how to best cook and flavor the ingredients at hand. My only complaint is that I wasn't able to read more than a few pages without getting out of the chair and heading to the kitchen to cook.

*Molly Stevens is a contributing editor for Fine Cooking.* ♦

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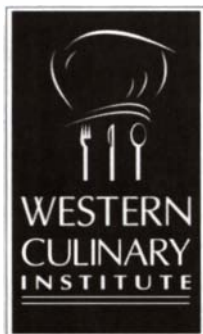
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# NUTRITION INFORMATION

Recipe (analysis per serving)	Page	Calories		Protein (g)	Carb (g)	Fats (g)				Chol (mg)	Sodium (mg)	Fiber (g)	Notes
		total	from fat			total	sat	mono	poly				
Tuscan Grilled Chicken Salad	33	340	170	31	13	18	3	12	2	80	740	3	
Roasted Chinese Chicken Salad	34	530	290	41	17	32	8	13	8	120	1350	4	
Chicken Salad with Fruits & Nuts	34	400	230	25	21	25	4	12	7	65	290	4	
Green Olive Tapenade Toasts	36	280	200	5	16	22	3	17	2	5	1770	2	½ cup on 1 oz. bread
Grilled Artichoke Hearts	37	50	0	3	10	0	0	0	0	0	270	5	
<i>Soupe au Pistou</i> w/Lamb Shanks	38	310	100	17	39	11	2	7	1	15	1030	10	per cup
Garden Lettuces w/Baked Goat Cheese	38	370	310	10	6	34	12	19	2	35	400	1	
Baked Peaches w/Blackberry Sauce	39	270	130	3	30	14	6	6	2	50	5	4	
French-Style Potato Salad	45	510	260	6	48	28	4	22	3	0	1190	6	
Three-Berry Fool	53	420	250	2	40	28	17	8	1	100	30	4	
Mango Mint Fool	53	400	200	2	53	23	14	7	1	80	170	4	
Blueberry Fool	53	410	250	3	41	28	17	8	1	100	190	4	
Lemongrass Shrimp Noodle Salad	61	450	100	31	58	11	2	3	5	220	830	4	
Stir-Fried Vegetable Noodle Salad	61	460	160	13	65	18	3	5	10	0	590	6	
Grilled Pork Noodle Salad	61	630	190	42	66	21	6	8	6	100	580	3	
<i>Nuoc Cham</i>	61	10	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	240	0	per tablespoon
Lobster Napoleon	68	290	150	12	28	16	5	8	2	35	710	5	with ½ tsp. basil oil
Strawberry & Champagne Terrine	77	90	0	2	15	0	0	0	0	0	5	2	based on 10 servings
Strawberry Hazelnut Torte	78	530	370	6	37	41	22	14	3	120	160	2	based on 10 servings
Frozen Strawberry "Pink Lemonade"	79	120	0	0	31	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	per ½ cup
Strawberries w/Balsamic Sabayon	79	230	170	3	14	19	11	6	1	165	20	1	based on 8 servings
Indian-Spiced Mussels or Clams	98	310	190	24	7	22	7	4	8	55	250	2	

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of San Diego, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in

the calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used.

## A Bowl of Spicy Shellfish in Minutes

I'm always amazed that some people only order steamed mussels and clams at restaurants. Sometimes I want to say, "Don't you know how easy—and inexpensive—these shellfish are to prepare at home?" A bowlful of briny-sweet clams or mussels is just what I turn to at home when I want a great meal fast.

I've been making this particular dish for years. I just love the Indian flavors—the warmth of the spices and the sweet creaminess of the coco-

nut milk are wonderful with the steamed shellfish. Though the dish has an exotic feeling to it, the ingredients are all sold in your supermarket. You can find canned coconut milk with Thai ingredients in the "international" section.

Most clams and mussels you see at the market are practically ready for the pot. If their shells seem gritty, scrub them under cold running water. Because the shells of cultivated mussels are usually free of barnacles and

other debris, this step doesn't take long. You'll also want to trim any stringy beards on the mussels with a knife or scissors before cooking them. Again, this step sounds like a lot of work but it takes only minutes, as does the actual cooking time.

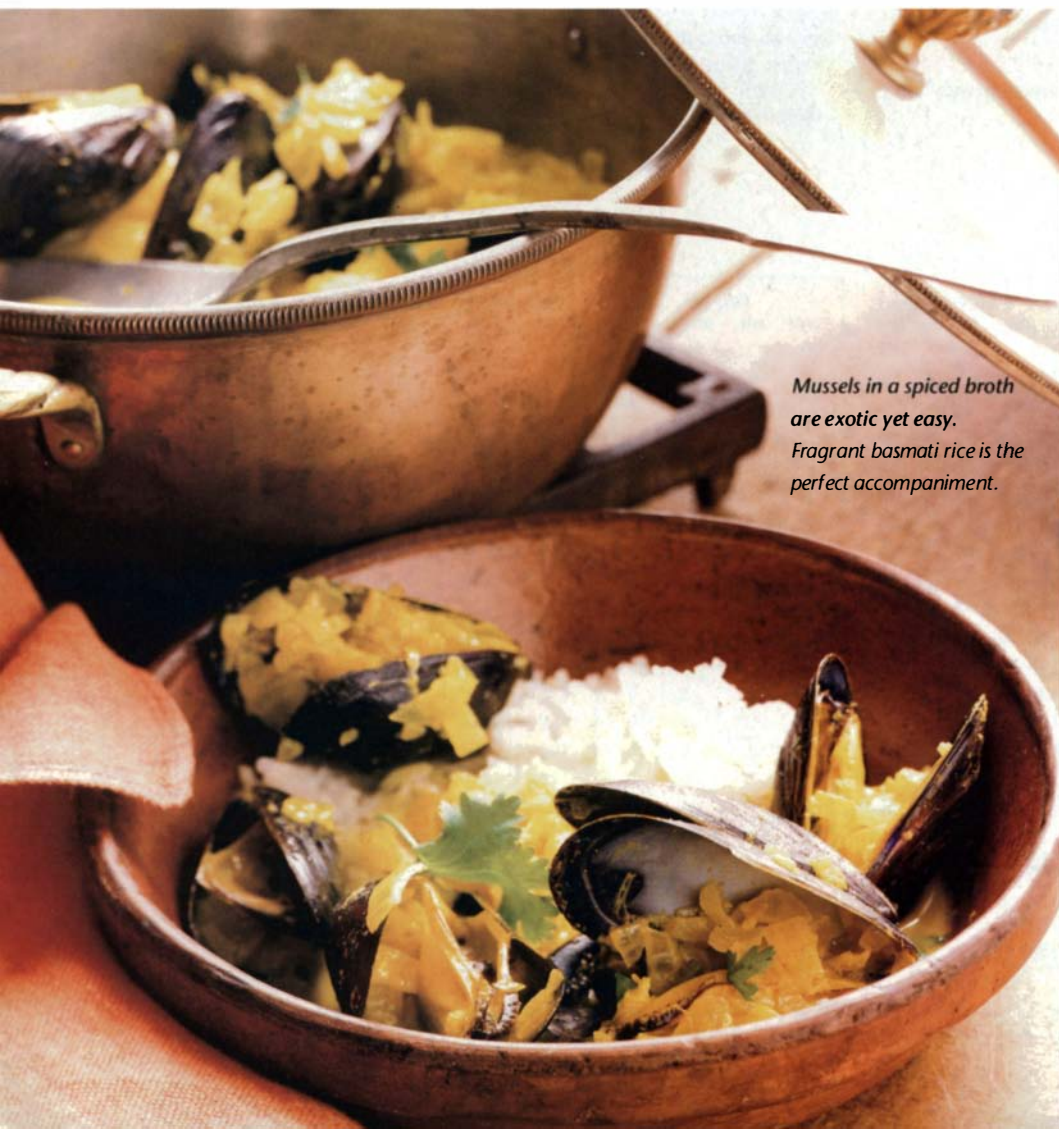
I love showering this dish with chopped cilantro; its fresh, green flavor tempers the heat of the cayenne and lightens the feel of the coconut milk. If you don't like cilantro, a mix of chopped

fresh basil and mint would also add color and punch.

Fragrant, nutty basmati rice is the perfect accompaniment to the clams, but regular white rice and noodles are also great for soaking up that wonderful broth.

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Joyce Goldstein, the former chef-owner of Square One in San Francisco, is now an author and restaurant consultant. Her latest book is *Kitchen Conversations* (William Morrow, 1996). ♦



Mussels in a spiced broth are exotic yet easy. Fragrant basmati rice is the perfect accompaniment.

### Indian-Spiced Mussels or Clams

Mussels, which are slightly sweeter than clams, benefit from a little extra acid, so use the larger amount of lemon juice when cooking mussels in this recipe. Serves four.

**1/4 cup vegetable oil**  
**2 Tbs. grated fresh ginger**  
**2 yellow onions, chopped**  
**1/4 tsp. salt**  
**1 Tbs. ground coriander**  
**1 tsp. ground turmeric**  
**1/4 tsp. cayenne**  
**2/3 cup homemade or low-salt canned chicken or fish stock**  
**1/2 cup coconut milk**  
**2 to 3 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**  
**2 lb. mussels, scrubbed and debearded, or 4 dozen clams, scrubbed (discard any gaping shellfish that don't close at least partially when you tap them)**  
**1/4 cup chopped cilantro**

In a large, heavy-based skillet or saucepan, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the ginger and onion and sauté over moderate heat, stirring often, until soft, 8 to 10 min. Add the salt, coriander, turmeric, and cayenne; stir to distribute the spices evenly. Cook the spices about 1 min. Add the stock, coconut milk, and lemon juice, and bring to a boil. Add the mussels or clams. Cover the pan until the shellfish open, about 5 to 8 min. (Discard any mussels or clams that don't open after cooking.) Sprinkle with the cilantro and serve with rice or noodles.

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# Creamy, Dreamy Handmade Doughnuts



Nineteen years ago, Canadian-born Alex Kogler retired from the hard-hitting life of a professional hockey player and made a sweet transition to life as a doughnut baker. Now instead of waking up for dawn practice, Kogler spends the wee hours of

every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday morning making doughnuts in his tiny shop, Butler's Colonial Donut House in Westport, Massachusetts. He has to start early to keep up with the demands of his customers, who come especially for his light-as-air yeast doughnuts, which are fried to a golden brown, filled with freshly whipped real cream (and some with a bit of black raspberry jam), and then sprinkled with sugar. Just one more, the customers keep telling him....



*A clunky machine cuts tender dough. The Duchess cutter divides the raised doughnut dough into pieces of equal weight. Kogler then shapes the cut dough by hand.*



*Out of the fryer, onto the cooling rack. These golden buns and "long johns" await splitting and filling.*



*Finished with a sprinkling of sugar. The whipped cream filled doughnuts don't last long at Butler's. The tiny shop offers a variety of doughnuts, but none as popular as these.*



Photos: Ben Fink

*"Nobody uses real whipped cream anymore, but we do," says Alex Kogler when asked to explain the popularity of his raised doughnuts. He makes plenty of other delicious varieties year-round, but Kogler has to stop making the cream-filled ones in the hot summer months.*